

**The Death and Resurrection of
Almanson the Gentle Robber:**

**A Book I Have Written
And Never Read**

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Mike Overby

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To all the unread books I've bought before.

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Introduction

The title is literal. This is a book conceived in plagiarism, rightfully attributed to me as its creator, and I deliberately tried not to commune with the work during its creation. I never “authored” it in the traditional sense. I have never read the result. I didn’t even edit it further than correcting obvious spacing issues or removing pictures that came with some of the stories.

I composed this book in one night by going to Project Gutenberg and searching for collections of short stories to plagiarize. I read only the titles of each story in the collection and, to minimize reading those as much as possible, I decided to take the last story in each collection by default. I couldn’t even tell you where to find the inceptive versions of these works because I didn’t read them and didn’t retain any context clues pointing toward those older versions. You could find out, if you care, by searching sentences from this book online. Anything in Project Gutenberg should be discoverable through the Internet Archive’s text search utility.

After collecting the story titles for the names of my chapters, I fashioned the following story out of them. Until I got to that stage, I had no idea what this story would even be about. I still don’t, really.

Certainly, some will say that I did not write this book merely because I plagiarized its contents. They are wrong because they were taught to conflate inceptive composition with composition itself. Setting that aside for another book to cover, can someone write a book without reading it? Plenty of people have written books and never read them afterwards. They would have read it during the composition process, surely. Editing requires reading. Even if they hire out the editing to someone else, revision requires reading. Well, why don’t we take a step back a second. Is there already a kind of acceptable writing process where the author never reads the book? Yes.

Plenty of people hire ghostwriters to write books for them and never read the books later. Categorically, we attribute these works to their authors. The composition of this book is really no different than that;

ghostwriting is plagiarism. My ghostwriters just happen to be dead. Does that change the validity of the fact that I wrote this book? Only if you think people who use ghostwriters are liars. In which case, you're a judgmental prick, itching to get yourself deputized by the plagiarism police, but at least you are consistent.

All that aside, though, why? What is the purpose of this book I have never read? To challenge my ideas about plagiarism on their own terms as a plagiarist. To me, the joys of plagiarism primarily come from communing with the past to make the best expression of my ideas as possible. I have conceived this story through plagiarism, obviously and delightedly so. And yet I have not intellectually engaged with recontextualizing its constituent contents. Usually, when I plagiarize, I draw from myriad sources and liberally combine and disrespect and revere writing across whole centuries. I did my best to recreate the feeling inceptive writers ignorantly claim plagiarists feel when they plagiarize; that is, nothing. I created rules to constrain my writing and to force myself to, as much as possible, ignore my plagiaristic instincts and the connection to the literary legacy of humanity.

Did I succeed?

Did minimizing my decisions alienate me completely from the work before you? Is this auto-writing? Would the oracles of the past be proud of this innovation in their technique, to call forth the souls of the dead?

Not exactly. I find the inceptive creators' expectations were wrong. I could not help doing some thinking while creating it and the result is still art, meaning I think it would still be worth your time to think about it, too. Creating this book was still fun, even. Were my thoughts meaningful to interpreting the text? I guess we'll see what you think, but I'll remind you of the attitudes this book confronts before going through them.

Because anti-plagiarism norms are proselytized in classroom environments by teachers who prefer a one-size-fits-all approach to teaching composition, and they choose, much discussion of plagiarism revolves around so-called "wholesale plagiarism." That is, the copying of

an entire work without any input from the plagiarist. Generally, this is a strawman argument. The techniques of plagiarism are far more diverse, and perhaps far more interesting, than wholesale copying. Indeed, perhaps the inceptive writers can only focus so much on one form of plagiarism because they can only recognize one form of composition in their own writing; that is, trivially taking “from our own brains.” Sounds easy. In another context, I would vigorously contend that wholesale plagiarism can and does represent authorial intent and legitimate composition. Such an argument would be irrelevant here, because this book as a whole is not wholesale plagiarism. This book is a *collection* of wholesale plagiarism. Essentially any arrangement of items may imply some kind of intention on the part of the author. The extra step I took in composing this book was to remain ignorant of its contents, to try to think as little as possible while mirroring inceptive scolds’ fears. Anything above zero should overcome the expectations of the anti-plagiarist. Did I make it to zero?

Where could meaning have crept in?

To be fair, I did cheat a tiny bit. In a few cases, I chose a story that had a more interesting title than the final short story in every collection. Even this tiny deviation is more effort than an anti-plagiarist expects of a plagiarist. Still, there’s no reason they couldn’t have been the final story in the collections. Does mere discriminating between titles without any context represent a shred of my authorial essence? Let’s think about that.

Likewise, when selecting books to copy, I couldn’t include any works by my favorite authors. I probably cut out any author I had ever heard of, which means I have absolutely no idea what the quality of the writing is in this book. Nevertheless, it represents myself and my work. Is that meaningful? Let’s think about that.

I copied these stories from Project Gutenberg because I couldn’t rely on the Internet Archive’s automated OCR to put out typographically correct text. It was a practical constraint that I had to take into account in the preparation of this book. Is that meaningful? Does the book inherit meaning from Project Gutenberg’s selection of stories to copy and index on their website? Let’s think about that.

There is probably more than one story in this that is quite racist. They may use foul language and old slurs. This is a consequence of interacting uncritically with the public domain. Although I do it deliberately here to make a larger work of art, I invite you to think about all the times in your life you've experienced someone doing the same thing and sweeping the racism under the rug. The public domain is filled with racist material because, for the last several hundred years, pop culture has been created to prop up white supremacy. At minimum, it was influenced by that force. We shouldn't be importing these attitudes into the future just because they were there, and we shouldn't be pretending like stories we happen to like weren't at least influenced by white supremacy. We also shouldn't be holding back anti-racist works made to support people of color from the public domain. A copyright system that would keep anti-racist works restricted for longer than the white supremacist works were restricted is racist. Is my failure to filter out these words a meaningful choice? Let's think about that.

Are these meaningful, authorial choices?

I think these things are meaningful. Even without the cheating, they get my thoughts pumping. I think the titles of the chapters are cool. I hope you enjoy those! Arranging the titles in the order of the story also reflected a certain whimsy of my mind. I hope you enjoy that; I could even have a copyright on that if I wanted one! The form of this book as a disjointed novel reflects a certain degree of quality that I'm willing to accept as my work, even if I could never know if these works gel together perfectly or imperfectly. I hope you enjoy that! The fact that my medium is plagiarism is a deliberate authorial choice on my part. The project is not just conceptual, it is very personal and an expression of what I believe. I hope you enjoy that!

This project challenges my own ideas about how plagiarism is curational and contextual content. Can I curate content that I have never seen and have not verified the quality of? It turns out, yes. But perhaps it is not good. If I had read these works and thought they were good while you thought they were bad, the book would still be "not good" to you, no? Then that cannot be a meaningful aesthetic difference from any other creation. And yet my own personal rationalization for the joy I feel while

plagiarizing relies very heavily on that way I feel while plagiarizing. That is me putting myself into the art. And if it is severed this completely from the experience of creating the text, then maybe the joys of plagiarism are even broader than I previously thought!

With this in mind, I present to you and hope you enjoy *a book I have written and never read*.

The Story of Almansor

Sire, the men who have preceded me have told wonderful stories which they had heard in strange lands; whilst I must confess with shame that I do not know a single tale that is worthy of your attention. Nevertheless if it will not weary you, I will relate the strange history of one of my friends.

On the Algerian privateer, from which your generous hand set me free, was a young man of my own age who did not seem to have been born to the slave-costume that he wore. The other unfortunates on the ship were either rough, coarse people, with whom I did not care to associate or people whose language I did not understand; therefore, every moment that I had to myself was spent in the company of this young man. He called himself Almansor, and, judging from his speech, was an Egyptian. We were well pleased to be in each other's society, and one day we chanced to tell our stories to one another; and I discovered that my friend's story was far more remarkable than my own. Almansor's father was a prominent man in an Egyptian city, whose name he failed to give me. The days of his childhood passed pleasantly, surrounded by all the splendor and comfort earth could give. At the same time, he was not too tenderly nurtured, and his mind was early cultivated: for his father was a wise man who taught him the value of virtue, and provided him with a teacher who was a famous scholar, and who instructed him in all that a young man should know. Almansor was about ten years old when the Franks came over the sea to invade his country and wage war upon his people.

The father of this boy could not have been very favorably regarded by the Franks, for one day, as he was about to go to morning prayers, they came and demanded first his wife as a pledge of his faithful adherence to the Franks, and when he would not give her up, they seized his son and carried him off to their camp.

When the young slave had got this far in his story, the sheik hid his face in his hands, and there arose a murmur of indignation in the *salon*. "How can the young man there be so indiscreet?" cried the friends of the

sheik, "and tear open the wounds of Ali Banu by such stories, instead of trying to heal them? How can he recall his anguish, instead of trying to dissipate it?" The steward, too, was very angry with the shameless youth, and commanded him to be silent. But the young slave was very much astonished at all this, and asked the sheik whether there was any thing in what he had related that had aroused his displeasure. At this inquiry, the sheik lifted his head, and said: "Peace, my friends; how can this young man know any thing about my sad misfortune, when he has not been under this roof three days! might there not be a case similar to mine in all the cruelties the Franks committed? May not perhaps this Almansor himself----but proceed, my young friend!" The young slave bowed, and continued:

The young Almansor was taken to the enemy's camp. On the whole, he was well treated there, as one of the generals took him into his tent, and being pleased with the answers of the boy that were interpreted to him, took care to see that he wanted for nothing in the way of food and clothes. But the homesickness of the boy made him very unhappy. He wept for many days; but his tears did not move the hearts of these men to pity. The camp was broken, and Almansor believed that he was now about to be returned to his home; but it was not so. The army moved here and there, waged war with the Mamelukes, and took the young Almansor with them wherever they went. When he begged the generals to let him return home, they would refuse, and tell him that he would have to remain with them as a hostage for his father's neutrality. Thus was he for many days on the march.

One day, however, there was a great stir in camp, and it did not escape the attention of the boy. There was talk about breaking camp, or withdrawing the troops, of embarking on ships; and Almansor was beside himself with joy. "For now," he reasoned, "when the Franks are about to return to their own country, they will surely set me at liberty." They all marched back towards the coast, and at last reached a point from which they could see their ships riding at anchor. The soldiers began to embark, but it was night before many of them were on the vessels. Anxious as Almansor was to keep awake--for he believed he would soon be set at liberty--he finally sank into a deep sleep. When he awoke, he found himself in a very small room, not the one in which he had gone to sleep in. He sprang from his couch; but when he struck the floor, he fell over, as the

floor reeled back and forth, and every thing seemed to be moving and dancing around him. He at last got up, steadied himself against the walls, and attempted to make his way out of the room.

A strange roaring and rushing was to be heard all about him. He knew not whether he waked or dreamed; for he had never heard anything at all like it. Finally he reached a small stair-case, which he climbed with much difficulty, and what a sensation of terror crept over him! For all around nothing was to be seen but sea and sky; he was on board a ship! He began to weep bitterly. He wanted to be taken back, and would have thrown himself into the sea with the purpose of swimming to land if the Franks had not held him fast. One of the officers called him up, and promised that he should soon be sent home if he would be obedient, and represented to him that it would not have been possible to send him home across the country, and that if they had left him behind he would have perished miserably.

But the Franks did not keep faith with him; for the ship sailed on for many days, and when it finally reached land, it was not the Egyptian, but the Frankish coast. During the long voyage, and in their camp too, Almansor had learned to understand and to speak the language of the Franks; and this was of great service to him now, in a country where nobody knew his own language. He was taken a long journey through the country, and everywhere the people turned out in crowds to see him; for his conductors announced that he was the son of the King of Egypt, who was sending him to their country to be educated. The soldiers told this story to make the people believe that they had conquered Egypt, and had concluded a peace with that country. After his journey had continued several days, they came to a large city, the end of their journey. There he was handed over to a physician, who took him into his home and instructed him in all the customs and manners of the Franks.

First of all, he was required to put on Frankish clothes, which he found very tight, and not nearly as beautiful as his Egyptian costume. Then he had to abstain from making an obeisance with crossed arms, but when he wished to greet any one politely, he must, with one hand, lift from his head the monstrous black felt hat that had been given him to wear, let the other hand hang at his side, and give a scrape with his right foot. He could no longer sit down on his crossed legs, as is the proper custom in the Levant,

but he had to seat himself on a high-legged chair, and let his feet hang down to the floor. Eating also caused him not a little difficulty; for every thing that he wished to put in his mouth he had to first stick on a metal fork.

The doctor was a very harsh, wicked man, given to teasing the boy; for when the lad would forget himself and say to an acquaintance, "*Salem aleicum!*" the doctor would beat him with his cane telling him he should have said, "*Votre serviteur!*" Nor was he allowed to think, or speak, or write in his native tongue; at the very most, he could only dream in it; and he would doubtless have entirely forgotten his own language, had it not been for a man living in that city, who was of the greatest service to him.

This was an old but very learned man, who knew a little of every Oriental language--Arabic, Persian, Coptic, and even Chinese. He was held in that country to be a miracle of learning, and he received large sums of money for giving lessons in these languages. This man sent for Almansor several times a week, treated him to rare fruits and the like; and on these occasions the boy felt as if he were at home once more in his own country. The old gentleman was a very singular man. He had some clothes made for Almansor, such as Egyptian people of rank wore. These clothes he kept in a particular room in his house, and whenever Almansor came, he sent him with a servant to this room and had the boy dressed after the fashion of his own country. From there the boy was taken to a *salon* called "Little Arabia." This *salon* was adorned with all kinds of artificially-grown trees--such as palms, bamboos, young cedars, and the like; and also with flowers that grew only in the Levant. Persian carpets lay on the floor, and along the walls were cushions, but nowhere Frankish tables or chairs. Upon one of these cushions the old professor would be found seated, but presenting quite a different appearance from common. He had wound a fine Turkish shawl about his head for a turban, and had fastened on a gray beard, that reached to his sash, and looked for all the world, like the genuine beard of an important man. With these he wore a robe that he had had made from a brocaded dressing-gown, baggy Turkish trowsers, yellow slippers, and, peaceful as he generally was, on these days he had buckled on a Turkish sword, while in his sash stuck a dagger set with false stones. He smoked from a pipe two yards long, and was waited on by his servants, who were

likewise in Persian costumes, and one half of whom had been required to color their hands and face black.

At first all this seemed very strange to the youthful Almansor; but he soon found that these hours could be made very useful to him, were he to join in the mood of the old man. While at the doctor's he was not allowed to speak an Egyptian word, here the Frankish language was forbidden. On entering, Almansor was required to give the peace-greeting, to which the old Persian responded spiritedly, and then he would beckon the boy to sit down near him, and began to speak Persian, Arabic, Coptic, and all languages, one after another, and considered this a learned Oriental entertainment. Near him stood a servant--or, as he was supposed to be on these days, a slave--who held a large book. This book was a dictionary; and when the old man stumbled in his words, he beckoned to the slave, looked up what he wanted to say, and then continued his speech.

The slaves brought in sherbet in Turkish vessels and to put the old man in the best of humors, Almansor had only to say that every thing here was just as it was in the Levant. Almansor read Persian beautifully, and it was the chief delight of the old man to hear him. He had many Persian manuscripts, from which the boy read to him, then the old man would read attentively after him, and in this way acquired the right pronunciation. These were holidays for little Almansor, as the professor never let him go away unrewarded, and he often carried back with him costly gifts of money or linen, or other useful things which the doctor would not give him.

So lived Almansor for some years in the capital of the Franks; but never did his longing for home diminish. When he was about fifteen years old, an incident occurred that had great influence on his destiny. The Franks chose their leading general--the same with whom Almansor had often spoken in Egypt--to be their king. Almansor could see by the unusual appearance of the streets and the great festivities that were taking place, that something of the kind had happened; but he never once dreamed that this king was the same man whom he had seen in Egypt, for that general was quite a young man. But one day Almansor went to one of the bridges that led over the wide river which flowed through the city, and there he perceived a man dressed in the simple uniform of a soldier, leaning over the parapet and looking down into the water. The features of the man impressed

him as being familiar, and he felt sure of having seen him before. He tried to recall him to memory; and presently it flashed upon him that this man was the general of the Franks with whom he had often spoken in camp, and who had always cared kindly for him. He did not know his right name, but he mustered up his courage, stepped up to him, and, crossing his arms on his breast and making an obeisance, addressed him as he had heard the soldiers speak of him among themselves: "*Salem aleicum*, Little Corporal!"

The man looked up in surprise, cast a sharp look at the boy before him, recalled him after a moment's pause, and exclaimed: "Is it possible! you here, Almansor? How is your father? How are things in Egypt? What brings you here to us?"

Almansor could not contain himself longer; he began to weep, and said to the man: "Then you do not know what your countrymen--the dogs--have done to me, Little Corporal? You do not know that in all this time I have not seen the land of my ancestors?"

"I cannot think," said the man, with darkening brow, "I cannot think that they would have kidnapped you."

"Alas," answered Almansor, "it is too true. On the day that your soldiers embarked, I saw my fatherland for the last time. They took me away with them, and one general, who pitied my misery, paid for my living with a hateful doctor, who beats and half starves me. But listen, Little Corporal," continued he confidentially, "it is well that I met you here; you must help me."

The man whom he thus addressed, smiled, and asked in what way he should help him.

"See," said Almansor, "it would be unfair for me to ask much from you; you were very kind to me, but still I know that you are a poor man, and when you were general you were not as well-dressed as the others, and now, judging from your coat and hat, you cannot be in very good circumstances. But the Franks have recently chosen a sultan, and beyond doubt you know people who can approach him--the minister of war, maybe, or of foreign affairs, or his admiral; do you?"

"Well, yes," answered the man; "but what more?"

"You might speak a good word for me to these people, Little Corporal, so that they would beg the sultan to let me go. Then I should need some money for the journey over the sea; but, above all, you must promise me not to say a word about this to either the doctor or the Arabic professor!"

"Who is the Arabic professor?"

"Oh, he is a very strange man; but I will tell you about him some other time. If these two men should hear of this, I should not be able to get away. But will you speak to the minister about me? Tell me honestly!"

"Come with me," said the man; "perhaps I can be of some use to you now."

"Now?" cried the boy, in a fright. "Not for any consideration now; the doctor would whip me for being gone so long. I must hurry back!"

"What have you in your basket?" asked the soldier, as he detained him. Almansor blushed, and at first was not inclined to show the contents of his basket; but finally he said: "See, Little Corporal, I must do such services as would be given to my father's meanest slave. The doctor is a miserly man, and sends me every day an hour's distance from our house to the vegetable and fish-market. There I must make my purchases among the dirty market-women, because things may be had of them for a few coppers less than in our quarter of the city. Look! on account of this miserable herring, and this handful of lettuce, and this piece of butter, I am forced to take a two hours' walk every day. Oh, if my father only knew of it!"

The man whom Almansor addressed was much moved by the boy's distress, and answered: "Only come with me, and don't be afraid. The doctor shall not harm you, even if he has to go without his herring and salad to-day. Cheer up, and come along." So saying, he took Almansor by the hand and led him away with him; and although the boy's heart beat fast when he thought of the doctor, yet there was so much assurance in the man's words and manner, that he resolved to go with him. He therefore walked along by the side of the man, with his basket on his arm, through many streets; and it struck him as very wonderful that all the people took off their hats as they passed along and paused to look after them. He

expressed his surprise at this to his companion, but he only laughed and made no reply.

Finally they came to a magnificent palace. "Do you live here. Little Corporal?" asked Almansor.

"This is my house, and I will take you in to see my wife," replied the soldier.

"Hey! how finely you live! The sultan must have given you the right to live here free."

"You are right; I have this house from the emperor," answered his companion, and led him into the palace. They ascended a broad stair-case, and on coming into a splendid *salon*, the man told the boy to set down his basket, and he then led him into an elegant room where a lady was sitting on a divan. The man talked with her in a strange language, whereupon they both began to laugh, and the lady then questioned the boy in the Frankish language about Egypt. Finally the Little Corporal said to the boy: "Do you know what would be the best thing to do? I will lead you myself to the emperor, and speak to him for you!"

Almansor shrank back at this proposal, but he thought of his misery and his home. "To the unfortunate," said he, addressing them both, "to the unfortunate, Allah gives fresh courage in the hour of need. He will not desert a poor boy like me. I will do it; I will go to the emperor. But tell me. Little Corporal, must I prostrate myself before him? must I touch the ground with my forehead? What shall I do?"

They both laughed again at this, and assured him that all this was unnecessary.

"Does he look terrible and majestic?" inquired he further. "Tell me, how does he look?"

His companion laughed once more, and said: "I would rather not describe him to you, Almansor. You shall see for yourself what manner of man he is. But I will tell you how you may know him. All who are in the *salon* will, when the emperor is there, respectfully remove their hats. He who retains his hat on his head is the emperor."

So saying, he took the boy by the hand and went with him towards the *salon*. The nearer they came, the faster beat the boy's heart, and his knees began to tremble. A servant flung open the door, and revealed some thirty men standing in a half-circle, all splendidly dressed and covered with gold and stars (as is the custom in the land of the Franks for the chief ministers of the king). And Almansor thought that his plainly-dressed companion must be the least among these. They had all uncovered their heads, and Almansor now looked around to see who retained his hat; for that one would be the king. But his search was in vain; all held their hats in their hands, and the emperor could not be among them. Then, quite by chance, his eye fell upon his companion, and behold----he still had his hat on his head!

The boy was utterly confounded. He looked for a long time at his companion, and then said, as he took off his own hat: "*Salem aleicum*, Little Corporal! This much I know, that I am not the Sultan of the Franks, nor is it my place to keep my head covered. But you are the one who wears a hat; Little Corporal, are you the emperor?"

"You have guessed right," was the answer; "and, more than that, I am your friend. Do not blame me for your misfortune, but ascribe it to an unfortunate complication of circumstances, and be assured that you shall return to your fatherland in the first ship that sails. Go back now to my wife, and tell her about the Arabic professor and your other adventures. I will send the herrings and lettuce to the doctor, and you will, during your stay here, remain in my palace."

Thus spake the emperor. Almansor dropped on his knees before him, kissed his hand, and begged his forgiveness, as he had not known him to be the emperor.

"You are right," answered the emperor, laughing. "When one has been an emperor for only a few days, he cannot be expected to have the seal of royalty stamped on his forehead." Thus spake the emperor, and motioned the boy to leave the *salon*.

After this Almansor lived happily. He was permitted to visit the Arabic professor occasionally, but never saw the doctor again. In the course of some weeks, the emperor sent for him, and informed him that a ship was

lying at anchor in which he would send him back to Egypt. Almansor was beside himself with joy. But a few days were required in which to make his preparations; and with a heart full of thanks, and loaded down with costly presents, he left the emperor's palace, and travelled to the seashore, where he embarked.

But Allah chose to try him still more, chose to temper his spirit by still further misfortune, and would not yet let him see the coast of his fatherland. Another race of Franks, the English, were carrying on a naval warfare with the emperor. They took away all of his ships that they could capture; and so it happened that on the sixth day of Almansor's voyage, his ship was surrounded by English vessels, and fired into. The ship was forced to surrender, and all her people were placed in a smaller ship that sailed away in company with the others. Still it is fully as unsafe on the sea as in the desert, where the robbers unexpectedly fall on caravans, and plunder and kill. A Tunisian privateer attacked the small ship, that had been separated from the larger ships by a storm, and captured it, and all the people on board were taken to Algiers and sold.

Almansor was treated much better in slavery than were the Christians who were captured with him, for he was a Mussulman; but still he had lost all hopes of ever seeing his father again. He lived as the slave of a rich man for five years, and did the work of a gardener. At the end of that time, his rich master died without leaving any near heirs; his possessions were broken up, his slaves were divided, and Almansor fell into the hands of a slave-dealer, who had just fitted up a ship to carry his slaves to another market, where he might sell them to advantage. By chance I was also a slave of this dealer, and was put on this ship together with Almansor. There we got acquainted with each other, and there it was that he related to me his strange adventures. But as we landed I was a witness of a most wonderful dispensation of Allah. We had landed on the coast of Almansor's fatherland; it was the market-place of his native city where we were put up for sale; and O, Sire! to crown all this, it was his own, his dear father who bought him!

The sheik, All Banu, was lost in deep thought over this story, which had carried him along on the current of its events. His breast swelled,

his eye sparkled, and he was often on the point of interrupting his young slave; but the end of the story disappointed him.

"He would be about twenty-one years old, you said?" began the sheik.

"Sire, he is of my age, from twenty-one to twenty-two years old."

"And what did he call the name of his native city? You did not tell us that."

"If I am not mistaken, it was Alessandria!"

"Alessandria!" cried the sheik. "It was my son! Where is he living? Did you not say that he was called Kairam? Has he dark eyes and brown hair?"

"He has, and in confidential moods he called himself Kairam, and not Almansor."

"But, Allah! Allah! Yet, tell me: his father bought him before your eyes, you said. Did he say it was his father? Is he not my son!"

The slave answered: "He said to me: 'Allah be praised; after so long a period of misfortune, there is the market-place of my native city.' After a while, a distinguished-looking man came around the corner, at whose appearance Almansor cried: 'Oh, what a blessed gift of heaven are one's eyes! I see once more my revered father!' The man walked up to us, examined this and that one, and finally bought him to whom all this had happened; whereupon he praised Allah, and whispered to me. 'Now I shall return to the halls of fortune; it is my own father that has bought me.'"

"Then it was not my son, my Kairam!" exclaimed the sheik in a tone of anguish.

The young slave could no longer restrain himself. Tears of joy sprang into his eyes; he prostrated himself before the sheik, and said: "And yet it is your son, Kairam Almansor; for you are the one who bought him!"

"Allah! Allah! A wonder, a miracle!" cried those present, as they crowded closer. But the sheik stood speechless, staring at the young man, who turned his handsome face up to him. "My friend Mustapha!" said the

sheik at last to the old man, "before my eyes hangs a veil of tears so that I cannot see whether the features of his mother, which my Kairam bare, are graven on the face of this young man. Come closer and look at him!"

The old dervish stepped up, examined the features of the young man carefully, and laying his hand on the forehead of the youth, said: "Kairam, what was the proverb I taught you on that sad day in the camp of the Franks?"

"My dear master!" answered the young man, as he drew the hand of the dervish to his lips, "it ran thus: *So that one loves Allah, and has a clear conscience, he will not be alone in the wilderness of woe, but will have two companions to comfort him constantly at his side.*"

The old man raised his eyes gratefully to heaven, drew the young man to his breast, and then gave him to the sheik, saying: "Take him to your bosom; as surely as you have sorrowed for him these ten years, so surely is he your son!"

The sheik was beside himself with joy; he scanned the features of his newly-found son again and again, until he found there the unmistakable picture of his boy as he was before he had lost him. And all present shared in his joy, for they loved the sheik, and to each one of them it was as if a son had that day been sent to him.

Now once more did music and song fill these halls, as in the days of fortune and of joy. Once more must the young man tell his story, and all were loud in their praises of the Arabic professor, and the emperor, and all who had been kind to Kairam. They sat together until far into the night; and when the assembly broke up, the sheik presented each one with valuable gifts that they might never forget this day of joy.

But the four young men, he introduced to his son, and invited them to be his constant companions; and it was arranged that the son should read with the young writer, make short journeys with the painter, that the merchant should share in his songs and dances, and the other young man should arrange all the entertainments. They too received presents, and left the house of the sheik with light hearts.

"Whom have we to thank for all this?" said they to one another; "whom but the old man? Who could have foreseen all this, when we stood before this house and declaimed against the sheik?"

"And how easily we might have been led into turning a deaf ear to the discourses of the old man, or even into making sport of him? For he looked so ragged and poor, who would have suspected that he was the wise Mustapha?"

"And--wonderful coincidence--was it not here that we gave expression to our wishes?" said the writer. "One would travel, another see singing and dancing, the third have good company, and I---read and hear stories; and are not all our wishes fulfilled? May I not read all the sheik's books, and buy as many more as I choose?"

"And may not I arrange the banquets and superintend all his entertainments, and be present at them myself?" said the other.

"And I, whenever my heart is desirous of hearing songs and stringed instruments, may I not go and ask for his slaves?"

"And I," cried the painter; "until to-day I was poor, and could not set foot outside the town; and now I can travel where I choose."

"Yes," repeated they all, "it was fortunate that we accompanied the old man, else who knows what would have become of us?"

So they spoke and went cheerful and happy to their homes.

The Gentle Robber

Once there was a robber bold—not that he looked bold, for he had the gentlest of manners and the most persuasive tongue. It was with a certain manly shyness that he approached his victims, and his voice was very low and soft as he convinced them how greatly to their interest it would be to hand over their purses, so that many went on through the green forest paths with empty pockets, it is true, but with eyes full of tears of gratitude for the benefactor who had held them up.

"Pray don't mention it!" said the Robber Chief, as he deprecatingly thrust into his wallet the purses he had taken and heard the outpoured thanks. "It is nothing, nothing! You would have done as much for me at any time if you had"—he never finished his sentence, but the wistful admiration of the man with empty pockets always added the right clause—"if you had had the brains."

Now the Gentle Robber, it need hardly be said, was highly successful in his chosen calling, or, as he put it, "the holy saints had given him rich possessions." He had started out moderately in a remote corner of the forest, as became a young and unassuming retail cut-purse, but soon his domain extended from his own retired dell to the adjacent glade, and the merry outlaw who had prospered there gave up the business and became a scrivener's clerk. It was not long before the Robber Chief owned the whole forest: the title-deeds, to be sure, belonged to the Abbey, which lay in a fat green meadow at the edge of the wood, but the monks could not work the forest as the robber could, and whatever harvest of gold and of silver, of jewels, of rich cloths from the packs of merchants of the East was to be gathered there, this one man reaped in his own apologetic way, which always seemed to beg pardon of those who were despoiled, for doing them so much good at one time. Soon the country round the forest was his, and yokel, franklin, and squire, Sir Bertram from the Castle, and the Prior from the Abbey, began to render him accounts, and it came to pass that the Bishop at the capital city, Mertoun, and the King upon his throne, and the strong nobles about him trembled at the robber's name, for the waves of his power flowed out until they met the waves of the sea.

Dearly the Gentle Robber loved his work in all its aspects, and he was master of its least details. A brave fight with a sturdy yeoman going home from market with a half-year's gains was joy to him, and merry in his ears was the sound of the thwack, thwack, thwack of the oaken staves as they fell on head and shoulders; an encounter with a rich merchant's train brought him naught but exhilaration, and the deft, swift hand that emptied the pack and purse thrilled as it went about its chosen task. There was slow, sensuous pleasure in stripping off the garments of knight and of squire and leaving their limbs uncovered to the cold. Daintiest amusement of all was the spoiling of widow and of orphan: something of the ascetic lingered in the bosom of the Robber Chief, and rare and delicate was the task of emptying the scantily furnished larder, of carrying away the worn clothes, and the single jewel saved from the wreck of happier days. He found delight in feeling about his knees the clasp of the thin arms of the naked orphan as it wept for food, for genius knows no distinction of small and great, and yeoman and squire, knight and merchant, widow and orphan alike, thrilled him with a sense of his power, and through their cries sang in his ear the word "success."

In the course of time it came to pass that he became the chief support of the kingdom which he had caused to totter as he swept its riches into his own bulging pockets. When he came to court, as he sometimes did, wearing grave apparel and showing a modest face, the King leaned lovingly upon him; was he not financing the war with Binnamere and causing a half-dozen universities, which had but lately come into fashion, to rise in different parts of the land? The Bishop conferred weightily with him in quiet corners; was he not building the great cathedral which was to be the glory of the city throughout coming ages?

"Nay, nay, nay!" said the Bishop, waving a white, jeweled hand as the Chief began to divulge some of his larger plans. "Tell me not of thy wicked schemes! Thy methods I must condemn utterly, but if thou bringest me the money, well, I can at least see to it that it be not used for bad purposes. And speaking of money, we need for the walls of the apse a hundred bags of gold. Dost thou think thou couldst manage it?"

"Ay," said the Gentle Robber, and that night he despoiled nine men, killing three that resisted longest, for he was a great lover of Holy Church,

and a devout believer, nor could she ask of him any service that he would not perform.

Now the lust for gold is a strange thing. There be that gather it together into stockings and go hungry and dirty to the day's end for gold, and that is the miser's lust. There be that win it and spend it again freely for delicate food and fiery drink, and this is the sensualist's lust. There be that get it by cruel means and scatter it abroad on church and hospital, and this is the philanthropist's lust, which possessed the Robber Chief. Gold and jewels were piled so high in his forest cave that he could not see out of its window, and he hardly knew whether winter snow or the shadow of flickering leaves lay on the ground, nor could hungry church nor greedy halls of learning lessen his piles of treasure enough to let the sunlight in.

Far on the edge of the kingdom to eastward lived blunt Sir Guy of Lamont, and his son and heir was a young squire, Louis by name, who had grown up much alone, wandering in the greenwood that circled the castle. Strong of arm and lusty he grew, yet cared not for the hunt, for he was friend to fox and hare, and the wild deer knew and loved him. Living close to spreading oak and delicate beech, among green leaves and nesting things, he began to wear the look of those who see more than meets the eye, and knight and franklin chaffed him as he sat apart while they grew merry over mug of ale or glass of wine in his father's hall. As he dreamed his dreams and thought his thoughts, rumors of the deeds of the Robber Chief floated to his ears, and he was sorely puzzled. It was a wandering merchant who brought the tale, spreading out his stuffs of velvet and of silk over table and settle and chair, and showing three great fresh sword-cuts on his arm as he spoke:—

"Andrew, my brother, lost his head in the encounter, and it was severed by a single blow, but I escaped, though there be few that may."

With that he recounted all the tales that he had heard in his wanderings of the wrong-doing of this man, and they were many. Sir Guy listened with "Zounds!" and "'Sdeath!" but the youth said never a word of pity or of blame; yet, when the story-teller had finished, he marveled at the lad's eyes. They were gray eyes, with lashes dark and long, and the look in

them was as the look in the eyes of a gentle beast when he is hurt to the death; then came to them the sudden fire of the avenger of misdeeds.

"My hour has come to fight," said young Louis of Lamont to the great stag that licked his hand that evening in the forest as the sun went down in golden haze. "Men do not know this cruel wrong; I must go to tell them, and mayhap lead them forth with banner and with sword."

Early the next morning, when all were making merry at the hunt, he set the face of his snow-white steed to westward and rode down long, green, leafy ways and across a great level plain toward the setting of the sun. In doublet and hose of scarlet, laced with gold thread, he was comely to see, with a white plume in his velvet cap, and thick hair of yellow, clipped evenly at his neck, and on his face the beauty that shines out from a light within. All day he journeyed on, yearning to meet alone the Robber Chief, whom he pictured as a man brawny of arm and of evil countenance, wherein black brows hid the sinister eyes, and a black beard covered a cruel mouth; and the lad longed with the lusty strength of untried youth to measure swords with this terrible foe. That night a woman gave him shelter at a wayside hut, and told a tale of the Chief that chilled the young man's blood; the next night, as he lodged at a hall, deeds yet more cruel were recounted to him; and ever as he came nearer the heart of the kingdom, he found the air more rife with tidings of the Robber Chief's ill doings.

"They do not know," he said, lightly touching spur to his steed. "The King and the Bishop do not know of these wicked things. Pray God that I may come in time to lead men forth!"

At the edge of a great forest he met, one day, a tired-looking man on a tired horse. The rider was neatly clad in sober gray, and was both freshly shaven and neatly combed. Across his saddle lay a great bag of something that was wondrous heavy.

"Halt!" said the man, with a pleasant glance from his mild blue eyes. Then blood rose red to the young squire's cheek, and anger too great for any words lighted in his eyes, as his hand went to his dagger, and he urged his horse forward. It was a brave fight that he made, while the two steeds drew near and parted and drew near again, but a slender white hand with an iron grip reached deftly and snatched the dagger from his hand, nor

could he reach the short sword which he had so proudly belted to his side; and the strength of his adversary was as the strength of ten.

"Nay, be not foolish," said a soft voice, as the lad struck out with stinging fist; "'tis but thy purse I ask, and it would grieve me to do thee wrong. The purses of the kingdom belong to me."

"Now, by what right?" cried Louis of Lamont, between set teeth, his cheeks flaming deeper red.

"By the right of having wit enough to get them," answered the robber. Then he pinioned the lad's arm to his side and thrust a deft hand into his pocket, drawing out a purse of wrought gold.

"It will be to thy best advantage if thou canst but see it that way," he said courteously.

In the mind of the other the vision of dark, beetling brows and red, hairy cheeks was fading.

"Thou—thou art the Robber Chief," he stammered. His adversary bowed.

"It is thou who didst murder Baron Divonne, and who didst starve the Squire's daughter of Yverton with her seven children, and"—So great was his horror of the tales that flocked to his tongue that he failed to speak them, but a light as from the wings of the Angel of Judgment shone from his eyes and brow.

"The question is not, 'Shall I take thy purse?'" the Chief said gently. "I have it. The question is, 'How shall I dispose of it to the best advantage?'"

"It isn't that! I do not want the purse," said the young man scornfully; "but how canst thou traffic in crime?"

"I have little time for talking," said the Gentle Robber, with a hurt look on his face; he was extremely sensitive to adverse criticism. "Now I must be off. This great bag of gold is for the orphan hospital at the Abbey. If I may mention it without boasting, it derives most of its supplies from me," and he looked wistfully for approval.

"Its supplies of orphans?" demanded Louis of Lamont, with his stern young lip curved in scorn; but the face of the other was as the face of a man who has failed to teach a great lesson of good.

As the lad rode on through the forest, his head was bent as if a hand had struck it and had laid it low, but coming into the open, he saw far off, across the valley, the spires of the capital city, Mertoun, and its many red roofs gleaming by the blue river, and his heart throbbed within him for thankfulness and joy.

"Hasten!" he cried to the beast that bore him. "Yonder in that strong city be strong men to help me right ill deeds, and a minute gained may save some woman's life, or spare the bitter crying of a child."

His eyes were filled with a vision of the knights that would go out with him to war for the right, with the waving of plumes and the flaming of banners, in their hearts the anger of God for cruel wrong; and a yearning for coming combat tugged at the muscles of shoulder and of arm.

The palace of the Bishop was moated, and there was a drawbridge there, and within, as on a green island, rose walls of fine gray stone, with window arch and doorway delicately carved. There was one at hand who took his steed, and one who led the way for him, and anon he found himself in a sunlit chamber where the Bishop stood looking out upon the great cathedral which was rising stone by stone, with its blue-clad workmen standing against a bluer sky.

"What is it, my son?" asked the Bishop, when he saw a young squire standing before him, worn, dust-stained, with anger burning in his eyes.

"Sire," said the guest, bending low, "I have hasted thither to tell thee of great wrongs."

"They shall be redressed," said the Bishop, laying his hand upon the lad's head.

"There is a man," said Louis of Lamont, kneeling, his lips white with wrath, "who doeth cruel wrong and bringeth folk to death, and it must needs be that none in high places know, for he goeth unpunished."

"He shall be found and placed in my lowest dungeon," said the Bishop fiercely. "Now tell me what he hath done."

"On my way hither I lodged with a poor woman who told me that he had slain before her eyes her husband and her sons, and all for a cup of silver coin that stood upon the mantel."

"A mere cup of silver coin!" groaned the Bishop. "He shall hang."

Then he told of the murder of Baron Divonne, and of the Squire's daughter of Yverton, who was starved with her seven children; and he told all the tales that the wandering merchant had brought with his cloths of cashmere and of silk. As he spoke longer, the face of his host grew anxious, and when he finished, saying, "Men call him the Gentle Robber," black care sat upon the brow of the host.

"Delay not," pleaded Louis. "Give me armed men, for thou hast said that he shall die for his sins, and I have the blood of fighters in my veins."

"Nay, child," said the Bishop. "Not so."

"Thou hast promised!" he cried in amaze.

"Ay," he made answer, "but I knew not then that the offenses were so many and so great, or that the enterprise was—ahem!—planned upon so large a scale. That makes all different."

"That makes the need to punish him a thousandfold greater," stammered the lad.

"Tut, tut!" said the Bishop, with the solemn smile he wore. "Thou dost not understand: logic is ever lacking in the young."

"Should not stripes be laid upon him for each cry he hath drawn forth? Should he not lay down his life, if that were possible, for each life he hath taken?"

"I had thought, when I heard the first tale, that he should die for the single crime," the Bishop made answer, "but the case is altered by the later facts. 'A life for a life,' saith the Scripture, but naught of a life for a dozen or threescore, or an hundred, as the case may be."

Then a flame of anger shone out in the lad's face, and he waited.

"My son," said the Bishop tenderly, "thou art young and ignorant, yet will I try to teach thee something of right ways of thought. In judging, all depends upon the point of view, and matters that look often black at first statement grow white or gray when thoroughly understood. Let us look upon this question in another aspect. Dost see yonder great cathedral rising?"

Though the youth made no answer, the Bishop saw that he was looking at the gray stones and at the blue-clad workmen.

"'Tis God's house," said the Bishop, "nor may it arise save through the gifts of this man. Wrong hath he done, but all is forgiven for that his gold is bent to holy purposes."

"But wrong he doeth still," said Louis of Lamont, in the stern voice of youth.

The Bishop coughed behind his hand even while he spoke.

"There is much in the ways of Providence that we may not comprehend. God moveth in a mysterious way."

"Had the Robber Chief ceased from his crime and shown true penitence"—began the lad, but the Bishop interrupted.

"God hath need of the man and of all the gold that he will bring, that institutions of learning and holy places may arise in the land."

"God may be worshiped by wood and stream," said the youth, in the still, small voice of one who knew; "nor hath He need of gold that is the price of suffering and pain and tears;" and so he turned and went down the steps, worn and weary, with dust on his crimson garments, and shame on his spirit, and the light of his face grown dim.

It had come back to its shining, however, the next day, when he went before the King.

"It may well be that there is one bad man who hath power," he said to himself, "and he the Bishop; but God would not grant that all be so," and hope beamed again from his eyes.

"'Tis the son of my old friend, Guy of Lamont, sayest thou?" cried the King, as he raised the lad's chin with one royal finger. "By my troth, 'tis his father's face again, but different."

"Sire," said Louis, as he did reverence, "I have come to tell of cruel wrong, and to win from thee a promise of redress."

"Thou shalt have it!" cried the King, with his hand upon his sword. "Friend or child of my friend went never yet uncomforted from the foot of my throne. Speak thy wrong."

Then the youth told him all that he had told the Bishop, and added thereto other tales, and hope shone sternly in his eyes.

"Send forth with me a band of thy men-at-arms," prayed the suppliant. "Even now, perchance, are orphans made that might have grown tall in happiness save for this man's lust for gold."

Then the King looked about, and his face grew dark with anger, for some half smiled and hid their smiles as best they could with jeweled hand or velvet sleeve; some showed fear at seeing this thing, which was not breathed at court, boldly brought to light.

"Boy," said the King sternly, "hast no respect for them that be appointed to sit in high places, nor awe before an anointed King?"

"Yea, sire," answered Louis, marveling.

"Dost come before my throne with slanderous tales of one on whom I lean heavily and lovingly?"

"Sire," he said bravely, "thou dost not know his cruel deeds. He hath robbed and killed to the sickening of the heart."

"Mayhap," said the King, "but he hath carried all before him with great success, and so is the case altered. 'Tis a man of whom we have great need, and the young should not speak ill of older folk."

Then Louis of Lamont said never a word, but rose to his feet staggering, for the knowledge he had gained of men came as hard blows about the ears, and bending low, he turned away.

"Stay!" cried the King. "Thy offense is great: thou hast spoken ill of a public benefactor, yet if thou wilt hold thy tongue, nor repeat thy silly tales, I will make thee one of my courtiers, and thou shalt go brave in velvet and in jewels."

But the youth shook his head and went forth alone from the presence-chamber; all looked after him, with smiles and jeers and whispered words of scorn.

"Sdeath!" cried the King. "'Tis a madman fit but for a dungeon, yet, for the sake of my old friend, Guy of Lamont, can I not cast him there."

The lad groped his way unevenly down the marble steps of the palace as one gropes in a path that is full of pitfalls and has suddenly grown dark, and he wandered, not knowing where, through the dark streets, until he found himself in the square before the great cathedral. Here many were passing with hands full of flowers, red roses and tall white lilies and blue blossoms that grow pale among the wheat, for it was the feast day of a saint, and they went to deck the altar which stood within unfinished walls, that men might worship there under the blue sky.

"I will tell them," said the lad; so he stood upon the cathedral steps and repeated all the tale, and blossoms red and blossoms white were dropped at his feet, as men and women clustered about to hear.

"Ay!" they cried out, "we go hungry for this man, but who shall deliver us from him? Horses and armor could we find, perchance. Wilt lead us to him?"

Then of a sudden he smiled, and ceased speaking because of the choking in his throat; but after, he took up the tale and told it in the marketplace and before the Palace of Justice and wherever he could gather folk together.

As days passed, all this came to the ears of the King and of the Bishop and of the nobles of the court, and grave head met with grave head, and both were shaken solemnly in conference over this new peril which threatened the kingdom. One morn there went throughout the city a crier, who called aloud and read from a parchment in his hand to let men know that Louis of Lamont, son of Sir Guy, was cast out from Holy Church for

slander of one of her greatest sons. Henceforward no man should give him shelter, no woman food or drink, lest they too come under the ban; and should he speak future evil words, his life would be forfeit.

Yet one who loved him—and there were many—hid him; and the next day and the next he wandered in the streets, begging men to rise in vengeance against the Robber Chief. On the third day he was taken by armed men, and the decree went forth that Louis of Lamont should, after three days, be burned at the stake in the square of the Palace of Justice. The youth smiled when he heard his doom; almost he was glad to escape from a world which he had not logic enough to understand.

So the day came when he should die, and it was a Friday of midsummer. In the centre of the square stood an iron post to which criminals were wont to be tied, and to this they bound him. Close about him were heaped fagots of wood and dried branches, and within he stood in a motley garment, and the look upon his face was as the coming of the day. All about was a great press of people, merchant and butcher and cloth-spinner, and peasant folk from the country round; and on a dais, built high for better seeing, were knights and ladies and nobles of the court, with the King himself, and the Gentle Robber at his side, trimly clad in sober gray and gently smiling.

It was a soft day of golden sun, and the sky was blue above the place, and the least wind sighed softly as if for pity as it breathed about the iron stake and played with the yellow locks of the young Squire's hair and moved the red folds of the shameful garment that they had placed upon him. Lifting his face, he leaned his cheek against the wind, for it seemed to him a breeze that had played among the beech leaves in the ancient forest by his father's hall, and in taking leave of it he said farewell to his hound and to the woodland paths and to his father's face.

Now came a ghostly father, with a torch that flamed backward against the blue day, and in the name of God and Holy Church he bent and kindled the fagots. Then was there quick tumult and rush and stir through the square, for all rushed forward to see and to hear, and little maids were sorely trampled in the press by the great feet of smith and of husbandman, and women's aprons were badly torn. None cared, for all knew that saving

grace was to be won for their own souls if their eyes but caught a glimpse of an heretic that was being burned to death, and when the fire leaped high into the air, they gave God thanks. There was a flame in the young martyr's face that was not as the flame that leaped about him; but smoke and fire were speedy with their work, and his head bent over his breast, his body over the chain that bound him, and as his soul went free, folk breathed deeply in relief, saying that an evil-doer was dead. Upon the dais the King's broad face showed satisfaction; the Bishop lifted his eyes to heaven, thanking God, then let them rest on the gray stone walls of the cathedral, glad that now naught should prevent the walls of God's house from rising. In all the great crowd, none other was so devout and so thankful as the Gentle Robber, and his mild blue eyes were moist with tears as he whispered to the King:—

"'Tis marvelous, the ways by which Providence brings evil-doers to justice; ever the right prevails."

Then all went to the cathedral, knight, squire, and lady in velvet and in silk, the Bishop in holy robes of purple and of white, and common folk in blue jean and plain linen, that special service might be held in praise for this great deliverance, and the *Te Deum* sung.

The Man Who Could Not Lose

The Carters had married in haste and refused to repent at leisure. So blindly were they in love, that they considered their marriage their greatest asset. The rest of the world, as represented by mutual friends, considered it the only thing that could be urged against either of them. While single, each had been popular. As a bachelor, young “Champ” Carter had filled his modest place acceptably. Hostesses sought him for dinners and week-end parties, men of his own years, for golf and tennis, and young girls liked him because when he talked to one of them he never talked of himself, or let his eyes wander toward any other girl. He had been brought up by a rich father in an expensive way, and the rich father had then died leaving Champneys alone in the world, with no money, and with even a few of his father’s debts. These debts of honor the son, ever since leaving Yale, had been paying off. It had kept him very poor, for Carter had elected to live by his pen, and, though he wrote very carefully and slowly, the editors of the magazines had been equally careful and slow in accepting what he wrote.

With an income so uncertain that the only thing that could be said of it with certainty was that it was too small to support even himself, Carter should not have thought of matrimony. Nor, must it be said to his credit, did he think of it until the girl came along that he wanted to marry.

The trouble with Dolly Ingram was her mother. Her mother was a really terrible person. She was quite impossible. She was a social leader, and of such importance that visiting princes and society reporters, even among themselves, did not laugh at her. Her visiting list was so small that she did not keep a social secretary, but, it was said, wrote her invitations herself. Stylites on his pillar was less exclusive. Nor did he take his exalted but lonely position with less sense of humor. When Ingram died and left her many millions to dispose of absolutely as she pleased, even to the allowance she should give their daughter, he left her with but one ambition unfulfilled. That was to marry her Dolly to an English duke. Hungarian princes, French marquises, Italian counts, German barons, Mrs. Ingram could not see. Her son-in-law must be a duke. She had her eyes on two, one

somewhat shopworn, and the other a bankrupt; and in training, she had one just coming of age. Already she saw her self a sort of a dowager duchess by marriage, discussing with real dowager duchesses the way to bring up teething earls and viscounts. For three years in Europe Mrs. Ingram had been drilling her daughter for the part she intended her to play. But, on returning to her native land, Dolly, who possessed all the feelings, thrills, and heart-throbs of which her mother was ignorant, ungratefully fell deeply in love with Champneys Carter, and he with her. It was always a question of controversy between them as to which had first fallen in love with the other. As a matter of history, honors were even.

He first saw her during a thunder storm, in the paddock at the races, wearing a rain-coat with the collar turned up and a Panama hat with the brim turned down. She was talking, in terms of affectionate familiarity, with Cuthbert's two-year-old, The Scout. The Scout had just lost a race by a nose, and Dolly was holding the nose against her cheek and comforting him. The two made a charming picture, and, as Carter stumbled upon it and halted, the race-horse lowered his eyes and seemed to say: "Wouldn't YOU throw a race for this?" And the girl raised her eyes and seemed to say: "What a nice-looking, bright-looking young man! Why don't I know who you are?"

So, Carter ran to find Cuthbert, and told him The Scout had gone lame. When, on their return, Miss Ingram refused to loosen her hold on The Scout's nose, Cuthbert apologetically mumbled Carter's name, and in some awe Miss Ingram's name, and then, to his surprise, both young people lost interest in The Scout, and wandered away together into the rain.

After an hour, when they parted at the club stand, for which Carter could not afford a ticket, he asked wistfully: "Do you often come racing?" and Miss Ingram said: "Do you mean, am I coming to-morrow?"

"I do!" said Carter.

"Then, why didn't you say that?" inquired Miss Ingram. "Otherwise I mightn't have come. I have the Holland House coach for to-morrow, and, if you'll join us, I'll save a place for you, and you can sit in our box.

"I've lived so long abroad," she explained, "that I'm afraid of not being simple and direct like other American girls. Do you think I'll get on here at home?"

"If you get on with every one else as well as you've got on with me," said Carter morosely, "I will shoot myself."

Miss Ingram smiled thoughtfully. "At eleven, then," she said, "in front of the Holland House."

Carter walked away with a flurried, heated suffocation around his heart and a joyous lightness in his feet. Of the first man he met he demanded, "Who was the beautiful girl in the rain-coat?" And when the man told him, Carter left him without speaking. For she was quite the richest girl in America. But the next day that fault seemed to distress her so little that Carter, also, refused to allow it to rest on his conscience, and they were very happy. And each saw that they were happy because they were together.

The ridiculous mother was not present at the races, but after Carter began to call at their house and was invited to dinner, Mrs. Ingram received him with her habitual rudeness. As an impediment in the success of her ambition she never considered him. As a boy friend of her daughter's, she classed him with "her" lawyer and "her" architect and a little higher than the "person" who arranged the flowers. Nor, in her turn, did Dolly consider her mother; for within two months another matter of controversy between Dolly and Carter was as to who had first proposed to the other. Carter protested there never had been any formal proposal, that from the first they had both taken it for granted that married they would be. But Dolly insisted that because he had been afraid of her money, or her mother, he had forced her to propose to him.

"You could not have loved me very much," she complained, "if you'd let a little thing like money make you hesitate."

"It's not a little thing," suggested Carter. "They say it's several millions, and it happens to be YOURS. If it were MINE, now!" "Money," said Dolly sententiously, "is given people to make them happy, not to make them miserable."

“Wait until I sell my stories to the magazines,” said Carter, “and then I will be independent and can support you.”

The plan did not strike Dolly as one likely to lead to a hasty marriage. But he was sensitive about his stories, and she did not wish to hurt his feelings.

“Let’s get married first,” she suggested, “and then I can BUY you a magazine. We’ll call it CARTER’S MAGAZINE and we will print nothing in it but your stories. Then we can laugh at the editors!”

“Not half as loud as they will,” said Carter.

With three thousand dollars in bank and three stories accepted and seventeen still to hear from, and with Dolly daily telling him that it was evident he did not love her, Carter decided they were ready, hand in hand, to leap into the sea of matrimony. His interview on the subject with Mrs. Ingram was most painful. It lasted during the time it took her to walk out of her drawing-room to the foot of her staircase. She spoke to herself, and the only words of which Carter was sure were “preposterous” and “intolerable insolence.” Later in the morning she sent a note to his flat, forbidding him not only her daughter, but the house in which her daughter lived, and even the use of the United States mails and the New York telephone wires. She described his conduct in words that, had they come from a man, would have afforded Carter every excuse for violent exercise.

Immediately in the wake of the note arrived Dolly, in tears, and carrying a dressing-case.

“I have left mother!” she announced. “And I have her car downstairs, and a clergyman in it, unless he has run away. He doesn’t want to marry us, because he’s afraid mother will stop supporting his flower mission. You get your hat and take me where he can marry us. No mother can talk about the man I love the way mother talked about you, and think I won’t marry him the same day!”

Carter, with her mother’s handwriting still red before his eyes, and his self-love shaken with rage flourished the letter.

“And no mother,” he shouted, “can call ME a ‘fortune-hunter’ and a ‘cradle-robber’ and think I’ll make good by marrying her daughter! Not until she BEGS me to!”

Dolly swept toward him like a summer storm. Her eyes were wet and flashing. “Until WHO begs you to?” she demanded. “WHO are you marrying; mother or me?”

“If I marry you,” cried Carter, frightened but also greatly excited, “your mother won’t give you a penny!”

“And that,” taunted Dolly, perfectly aware that she was ridiculous, “is why you won’t marry me!”

For an instant, long enough to make her blush with shame and happiness, Carter grinned at her. “Now, just for that,” he said, “I won’t kiss you, and I WILL marry you!” But, as a matter of fact, he DID kiss her. Then he gazed happily around his small sitting-room. “Make yourself at home here,” he directed, “while I pack my bag.”

“I MEAN to make myself very much at home here,” said Dolly joyfully, “for the rest of my life.”

From the recesses of the flat Carter called: “The rent’s paid only till September. After that we live in a hall bedroom and cook on a gas-stove. And that’s no idle jest, either.”

Fearing the publicity of the City Hall license bureau, they released the clergyman, much to the relief of that gentleman, and told the chauffeur to drive across the State line into Connecticut.

“It’s the last time we can borrow your mother’s car,” said Carter, “and we’d better make it go as far as we can.”

It was one of those days in May. Blue was the sky and sunshine was in the air, and in the park little girls from the tenements, in white, were playing they were queens. Dolly wanted to kidnap two of them for bridesmaids. In Harlem they stopped at a jeweler’s shop, and Carter got out and bought a wedding-ring.

In the Bronx were dogwood blossoms and leaves of tender green and beds of tulips, and along the Boston Post Road, on their right, the Sound flashed in the sunlight; and on their left, gardens, lawns, and orchards ran with the road, and the apple trees were masses of pink and white.

Whenever a car approached from the rear, Carter pretended it was Mrs. Ingram coming to prevent the elopement, and Dolly clung to him. When the car had passed, she forgot to stop clinging to him.

In Greenwich Village they procured a license, and a magistrate married them, and they were a little frightened and greatly happy and, they both discovered simultaneously, outrageously hungry. So they drove through Bedford Village to South Salem, and lunched at the Horse and Hounds Inn, on blue and white china, in the same room where Major Andre was once a prisoner. And they felt very sorry for Major Andre, and for everybody who had not been just married that morning. And after lunch they sat outside in the garden and fed lumps of sugar to a charming collie and cream to a fat gray cat.

They decided to start housekeeping in Carter's flat, and so turned back to New York, this time following the old coach road through North Castle to White Plains, across to Tarrytown, and along the bank of the Hudson into Riverside Drive. Millions and millions of friendly folk, chiefly nurse-maids and traffic policemen, waved to them, and for some reason smiled.

"The joke of it is," declared Carter, "they don't know! The most wonderful event of the century has just passed into history. We are married, and nobody knows!"

But when the car drove away from in front of Carter's door, they saw on top of it two old shoes and a sign reading: "We have just been married." While they had been at luncheon, the chauffeur had risen to the occasion.

"After all," said Carter soothingly, "he meant no harm. And it's the only thing about our wedding yet that seems legal."

Three months later two very unhappy young people faced starvation in the sitting-room of Carter's flat. Gloom was written upon the countenance of each, and the heat and the care that comes when one desires to live, and lacks the wherewithal to fulfill that desire, had made them pallid and had drawn black lines under Dolly's eyes.

Mrs. Ingram had played her part exactly as her dearest friends had said she would. She had sent to Carter's flat, seven trunks filled with Dolly's clothes, eighteen hats, and another most unpleasant letter. In this, on the sole condition that Dolly would at once leave her husband, she offered to forgive and to support her.

To this Dolly composed eleven scornful answers, but finally decided that no answer at all was the most scornful.

She and Carter then proceeded joyfully to waste his three thousand dollars with that contempt for money with which on a honey-moon it should always be regarded. When there was no more, Dolly called upon her mother's lawyers and inquired if her father had left her anything in her own right. The lawyers regretted he had not, but having loved Dolly since she was born, offered to advance her any money she wanted. They said they felt sure her mother would "relent."

"SHE may," said Dolly haughtily. "I WON'T! And my husband can give me all I need. I only wanted something of my own, because I'm going to make him a surprise present of a new motor-car. The one we are using now does not suit us."

This was quite true, as the one they were then using ran through the subway.

As summer approached, Carter had suddenly awakened to the fact that he soon would be a pauper, and cut short the honey-moon. They returned to the flat, and he set forth to look for a position. Later, while still looking for it, he spoke of it as a "job." He first thought he would like to be an assistant editor of a magazine. But he found editors of magazines anxious to employ new and untried assistants, especially in June, were very few. On the contrary, they explained they were retrenching and cutting down expenses—they meant they had discharged all office boys who

received more than three dollars a week. They further “retrenched,” by taking a mean advantage of Carter’s having called upon them in person, by handing him three or four of his stories—but by this he saved his postage-stamps.

Each day, when he returned to the flat, Dolly, who always expected each editor would hastily dust off his chair and offer it to her brilliant husband, would smile excitedly and gasp, “Well?” and Carter would throw the rejected manuscripts on the table and say: “At least, I have not returned empty-handed.” Then they would discover a magazine that neither they nor any one else knew existed, and they would hurriedly readdress the manuscripts to that periodical, and run to post them at the letter-box on the corner.

“Any one of them, if ACCEPTED,” Carter would point out, “might bring us in twenty-five dollars. A story of mine once sold for forty; so to-night we can afford to dine at a restaurant where wine is NOT ‘included.’”

Fortunately, they never lost their sense of humor. Otherwise the narrow confines of the flat, the evil smells that rose from the baked streets, the greasy food of Italian and Hungarian restaurants, and the ever-haunting need of money might have crushed their youthful spirits. But in time even they found that one, still less two, cannot exist exclusively on love and the power to see the bright side of things—especially when there is no bright side. They had come to the point where they must borrow money from their friends, and that, though there were many who would have opened their safes to them, they had agreed was the one thing they would not do, or they must starve. The alternative was equally distasteful.

Carter had struggled earnestly to find a job. But his inexperience and the season of the year were against him. No newspaper wanted a dramatic critic when the only shows in town had been running three months, and on roof gardens; nor did they want a “cub” reporter when veterans were being “laid off” by the dozens. Nor were his services desired as a private secretary, a taxicab driver, an agent to sell real estate or automobiles or stocks. As no one gave him a chance to prove his unfitness for any of these callings, the fact that he knew nothing of any of them did

not greatly matter. At these rebuffs Dolly was distinctly pleased. She argued they proved he was intended to pursue his natural career as an author.

That their friends might know they were poor did not affect her, but she did not want them to think by his taking up any outside “job” that they were poor because as a literary genius he was a failure. She believed in his stories. She wanted every one else to believe in them. Meanwhile, she assisted him in so far as she could by pawning the contents of five of the seven trunks, by learning to cook on a “Kitchenette,” and to laundry her handkerchiefs and iron them on the looking-glass.

They faced each other across the breakfast-table. It was only nine o’clock, but the sun beat into the flat with the breath of a furnace, and the air was foul and humid.

“I tell you,” Carter was saying fiercely, “you look ill. You are ill. You must go to the sea-shore. You must visit some of your proud friends at East Hampton or Newport. Then I’ll know you’re happy and I won’t worry, and I’ll find a job. I don’t mind the heat—and I’ll write you love letters”—he was talking very fast and not looking at Dolly—“like those I used to write you, before——”

Dolly raised her hand. “Listen!” she said. “Suppose I leave you. What will happen? I’ll wake up in a cool, beautiful brass bed, won’t I—with cretonne window-curtains, and salt air blowing them about, and a maid to bring me coffee. And instead of a bathroom like yours, next to an elevator shaft and a fire-escape, I’ll have one as big as a church, and the whole blue ocean to swim in. And I’ll sit on the rocks in the sunshine and watch the waves and the yachts——”

“And grow well again!” cried Carter. “But you’ll write to me,” he added wistfully, “every day, won’t you?”

In her wrath, Dolly rose, and from across the table confronted him.

“And what will I be doing on those rocks?” she cried. “You KNOW what I’ll be doing! I’ll be sobbing, and sobbing, and calling out to the waves: ‘Why did he send me away? Why doesn’t he want me? Because he doesn’t love me. That’s why! He doesn’t LOVE me!’ And you DON’T!” cried Dolly. “You DON’T!”

It took him all of three minutes to persuade her she was mistaken.

“Very well, then,” sobbed Dolly, “that’s settled. And there’ll be no more talk of sending me away!

“There will NOT!” said Champneys hastily. “We will now,” he announced, “go into committee of the whole and decide how we are to face financial failure. Our assets consist of two stories, accepted, but not paid for, and fifteen stories not accepted.” In cash, he spread upon the table a meagre collection of soiled bills and coins. “We have twenty-seven dollars and fourteen cents. That is every penny we possess in the world.”

Dolly regarded him fixedly and shook her head.

“Is it wicked,” she asked, “to love you so?”

“Haven’t you been listening to me?” demanded Carter.

Again Dolly shook her head.

“I was watching the way you talk. When your lips move fast they do such charming things.”

“Do you know,” roared Carter, “that we haven’t a penny in the world, that we have nothing in this flat to eat?”

“I still have five hats,” said Dolly.

“We can’t eat hats,” protested Champneys.

“We can sell hats!” returned Dolly. “They cost eighty dollars apiece!”

“When you need money,” explained Carter, “I find it’s just as hard to sell a hat as to eat it.”

“Twenty-seven dollars and fourteen cents,” repeated Dolly. She exclaimed remorsefully: “And you started with three thousand! What did I do with it?”

“We both had the time of our lives with it!” said Carter stoutly. “And that’s all there is to that. Post-mortems,” he pointed out, “are useful only as guides to the future, and as our future will never hold a second three

thousand dollars, we needn't worry about how we spent the first one. No! What we must consider now is how we can grow rich quick, and the quicker and richer, the better. Pawning our clothes, or what's left of them, is bad economics. There's no use considering how to live from meal to meal. We must evolve something big, picturesque, that will bring a fortune. You have imagination; I'm supposed to have imagination, we must think of a plan to get money, much money. I do not insist on our plan being dignified, or even outwardly respectable; so long as it keeps you alive, it may be as desperate as—"

"I see!" cried Dolly; "like sending mother Black Hand letters!"

"Blackmail——" began that lady's son-in-law doubtfully.

"Or!" cried Dolly, "we might kidnap Mr. Carnegie when he's walking in the park alone, and hold him for ransom. Or"—she rushed on—"we might forge a codicil to father's will, and make it say if mother shouldn't like the man I want to marry, all of father's fortune must go to my husband!"

"Forgery," exclaimed Champneys, "is going further than I——"

"And another plan," interrupted Dolly, "that I have always had in mind, is to issue a cheaper edition of your book, 'The Dead Heat.' The reason the first edition of 'The Dead Heat' didn't sell——"

"Don't tell ME why it didn't sell," said Champneys. "I wrote it!"

"That book," declared Dolly loyally, "was never properly advertised. No one knew about it, so no one bought it!"

"Eleven people bought it!" corrected the author.

"We will put it in a paper cover and sell it for fifty cents," cried Dolly. "It's the best detective story I ever read, and people have got to know it is the best. So we'll advertise it like a breakfast food."

"The idea," interrupted Champneys, "is to make money, not throw it away. Besides, we haven't any to throw away. Dolly sighed bitterly.

“If only,” she exclaimed, “we had that three thousand dollars back again! I’d save SO carefully. It was all my fault. The races took it, but it was I took you to the races.”

“No one ever had to drag ME to the races,” said Carter. “It was the way we went that was extravagant. Automobiles by the hour standing idle, and a box each day, and——”

“And always backing Dromedary,” suggested Dolly. Carter was touched on a sensitive spot. “That horse,” he protested loudly, “is a mighty good horse. Some day——”

“That’s what you always said,” remarked Dolly, “but he never seems to have his day.”

“It’s strange,” said Champneys consciously. “I dreamed of Dromedary only last night. Same dream over and over again.” Hastily he changed the subject.

“For some reason I don’t sleep well. I don’t know why.”

Dolly looked at him with all the love in her eyes of a mother over her ailing infant.

“It’s worrying over me, and the heat,” she said. “And the garage next door, and the skyscraper going up across the street, might have something to do with it. And YOU,” she mocked tenderly, “wanted to send me to the sea-shore.”

Carter was frowning. As though about to speak, he opened his lips, and then laughed embarrassedly.

“Out with it,” said Dolly, with an encouraging smile. “Did he win?”

Seeing she had read what was in his mind, Carter leaned forward eagerly. The ruling passion and a touch of superstition held him in their grip.

“He ‘win’ each time,” he whispered. “I saw it as plain as I see you. Each time he came up with a rush just at the same place, just as they

entered the stretch, and each time he won!" He slapped his hand disdainfully upon the dirty bills before him. "If I had a hundred dollars!"

There was a knock at the door, and Carter opened it to the elevator boy with the morning mail. The letters, save one, Carter dropped upon the table. That one, with clumsy fingers, he tore open. He exclaimed breathlessly: "It's from PLYMPTON'S MAGAZINE! Maybe—I've sold a story!" He gave a cry almost of alarm. His voice was as solemn as though the letter had announced a death.

"Dolly," he whispered, "it's a check—a check for a HUNDRED DOLLARS!"

Guiltily, the two young people looked at each other.

"We've GOT to!" breathed Dolly. "GOT to! If we let TWO signs like that pass, we'd be flying in the face of Providence."

With her hands gripping the arms of her chair, she leaned forward, her eyes staring into space, her lips moving.

"COME ON, you Dromedary!" she whispered.

They changed the check into five and ten dollar bills, and, as Carter was far too excited to work, made an absurdly early start for the race-track.

"We might as well get all the fresh air we can," said Dolly. "That's all we will get!"

From their reserve fund of twenty-seven dollars which each had solemnly agreed with the other would not be risked on race-horses, Dolly subtracted a two-dollar bill. This she stuck conspicuously across the face of the clock on the mantel.

"Why?" asked Carter.

"When we get back this evening," Dolly explained, "that will be the first thing we'll see. It's going to look awfully good!"

This day there was no scarlet car to rush them with refreshing swiftness through Brooklyn's parkways and along the Ocean Avenue. Instead, they hung to a strap in a cross-town car, changed to the ferry, and

again to the Long Island Railroad. When Carter halted at the special car of the Turf Club, Dolly took his arm and led him forward to the day coach.

“But,” protested Carter, “when you’re spending a hundred dollars with one hand, why grudge fifty cents for a parlor-car seat? If you’re going to be a sport, be a sport.” “And if you’ve got to be a piker,” said Dolly, “don’t be ashamed to be a piker. We’re not spending a hundred dollars because we can afford it, but because you dreamt a dream. You didn’t dream you were riding in parlor-cars! If you did, it’s time I woke you.”

This day there was for them no box overlooking the finish, no club-house luncheon. With the other pikers, they sat in the free seats, with those who sat coatless and tucked their handkerchiefs inside their collars, and with those who mopped their perspiring countenances with rice-paper and marked their cards with a hat-pin. Their lunch consisted of a massive ham sandwich with a top dressing of mustard.

Dromedary did not run until the fifth race, and the long wait, before they could learn their fate, was intolerable. They knew most of the horses, and, to pass the time, on each of the first races Dolly made imaginary bets. Of these mental wagers, she lost every one.

“If you turn out to be as bad a guesser when you’re asleep as I am when I’m awake,” said Dolly, “we’re going to lose our fortune.”

“I’m weakening!” declared Carter. “A hundred dollars is beginning to look to me like an awful lot of money. Twenty-seven dollars, and there’s only twenty of that left now, is mighty small capital, but twenty dollars plus a hundred could keep us alive for a month!”

“Did you, or did you not, dream that Dromedary would win?” demanded Dolly sternly.

“I certainly did, several times,” said Carter. “But it may be I was thinking of the horse. I’ve lost such a lot on him, my mind may have——”

“Did you,” interrupted Dolly, “say if you had a hundred dollars you’d bet it, and did a hundred dollars walk in through the door instantly?”

Carter, reassured, breathed again. “It certainly did!” he repeated.

Even in his proud days, Carter had never been able to bet heavily, and instead of troubling the club-house commissioners with his small wagers, he had, in the ring, bet ready money. Moreover, he believed in the ring he obtained more favorable odds, and, when he won, it pleased him, instead of waiting until settling day for a check, to stand in a line and feel the real money thrust into his hand. So, when the fourth race started he rose and raised his hat.

“The time has come,” he said.

Without looking at him, Dolly nodded. She was far too tremulous to speak.

For several weeks Dromedary had not been placed, and Carter hoped for odds of at least ten to one. But, when he pushed his way into the arena, he found so little was thought of his choice that as high as twenty to one was being offered, and with few takers. The fact shattered his confidence. Here were two hundred book-makers, trained to their calling, anxious at absurd odds to back their opinion that the horse he liked could not win. In the face of such unanimous contempt, his dream became fantastic, fatuous. He decided he would risk only half of his fortune. Then, should the horse win, he still would be passing rich, and should he lose, he would, at least, have all of fifty dollars.

With a book-maker he wagered that sum, and then, in unhappy indecision, stood, in one hand clutching his ticket that called for a potential thousand and fifty dollars, and in the other an actual fifty. It was not a place for meditation. From every side men, more or less sane, swept upon him, jostled him, and stamped upon him, and still, struggling for a foothold, he swayed, hesitating. Then he became conscious that the ring was nearly empty, that only a few shrieking individuals still ran down the line. The horses were going to the post. He must decide quickly. In front of him the book-maker cleaned his board, and, as a final appeal, opposite the names of three horses chalked thirty to one. Dromedary was among them. Such odds could not be resisted. Carter shoved his fifty at the man, and to that sum added the twenty dollars still in his pocket. They were the last dollars he owned in the world. And though he knew they were his last, he was fearful

lest the book-maker would refuse them. But, mechanically, the man passed them over his shoulder.

“And twenty-one hundred to seventy,” he chanted.

When Carter took his seat beside Dolly, he was quite cold. Still, Dolly did not speak. Out of the corner of her eyes she questioned him.

“I got fifty at twenty to one,” replied Carter, “and seventy at thirty!”

In alarm, Dolly turned upon him.

“SEVENTY!” she gasped.

Carter nodded. “All we have,” he said. “We have sixty cents left, to start life over again!”

As though to encourage him, Dolly placed her finger on her race-card.

“His colors,” she said, “are ‘green cap, green jacket, green and white hoops.’”

Through a maze of heat, a half-mile distant, at the starting-gate, little spots of color moved in impatient circles. The big, good-natured crowd had grown silent, so silent that from the high, sun-warmed grass in the infield one could hear the lazy chirp of the crickets. As though repeating a prayer, or an incantation, Dolly’s lips were moving quickly.

“Green cap,” she whispered, “green jacket, green and white hoops!”

With a sharp sigh the crowd broke the silence. “They’re off!” it cried, and leaned forward expectant.

The horses came so fast. To Carter their conduct seemed outrageous. It was incredible that in so short a time, at a pace so reckless, they would decide a question of such moment. They came bunched together, shifting and changing, with, through the dust, flashes of blue and gold and scarlet. A jacket of yellow shot out of the dust and showed in

front; a jacket of crimson followed. So they were at the half; so they were at the three-quarters.

The good-natured crowd began to sway, to grumble and murmur, then to shout in sharp staccato.

“Can you see him?” begged Dolly.

“No,” said Carter. “You don’t see him until they reach the stretch.”

One could hear their hoofs, could see the crimson jockey draw his whip. At the sight, for he rode the favorite, the crowd gave a great gasp of concern.

“Oh, you Gold Heels!” it implored.

Under the whip, Gold Heels drew even with the yellow jacket; stride by stride, they fought it out alone.

“Gold Heels!” cried the crowd.

Behind them, in a curtain of dust, pounded the field. It charged in a flying wedge, like a troop of cavalry. Dolly, searching for a green jacket, saw, instead, a rainbow wave of color that, as it rose and fell, sprang toward her in great leaps, swallowing the track.

“Gold Heels!” yelled the crowd.

The field swept into the stretch. Without moving his eyes, Carter caught Dolly by the wrist and pointed. As though giving a signal, he shot his free hand into the air.

“Now!” he shouted.

From the curtain of dust, as lightning strikes through a cloud, darted a great, raw-boned, ugly chestnut. Like the Empire Express, he came rocking, thundering, spurning the ground. At his coming, Gold Heels, to the eyes of the crowd, seemed to falter, to slacken, to stand still. The crowd gave a great cry of amazement, a yell of disgust. The chestnut drew even with Gold Heels, passed him, and swept under the wire. Clinging to his neck was a little jockey in a green cap, green jacket, and hoops of green and white.

Dolly's hand was at her side, clutching the bench. Carter's hand still clasped it. Neither spoke or looked at the other. For an instant, while the crowd, no longer so good-natured, mocked and jeered at itself, the two young people sat quite still, staring at the green field, at the white clouds rolling from the ocean. Dolly drew a long breath.

"Let's go!" she gasped. "Let's thank him first, and then take me home!"

They found Dromedary in the paddock, and thanked him, and Carter left Dolly with him, while he ran to collect his winnings. When he returned, he showed her a sheaf of yellow bills, and as they ran down the covered board walk to the gate, they skipped and danced.

Dolly turned toward the train drawn up at the entrance.

"Not with me!" shouted Carter. "We're going home in the reddest, most expensive, fastest automobile I can hire!"

In the "hack" line of motor-cars was one that answered those requirements, and they fell into it as though it were their own.

"To the Night and Day Bank!" commanded Carter.

With the genial democracy of the race-track, the chauffeur lifted his head to grin appreciatively. "That listens good to me!" he said.

"I like him!" whispered Dolly. "Let's buy him and the car."

On the way home, they bought many cars; every car they saw, that they liked, they bought. They bought, also, several houses, and a yacht that they saw from the ferry-boat. And as soon as they had deposited the most of their money in the bank, they went to a pawnshop in Sixth Avenue and bought back many possessions that they had feared they never would see again.

When they entered the flat, the thing they first beheld was Dolly's two-dollar bill.

"What," demanded Carter, with repugnance, "is that strange piece of paper?"

Dolly examined it carefully. "I think it is a kind of money," she said, "used by the lower classes."

They dined on the roof at Delmonico's. Dolly wore the largest of the five hats still unsold, and Carter selected the dishes entirely according to which was the most expensive. Every now and again they would look anxiously down across the street at the bank that held their money. They were nervous lest it should take fire.

"We can be extravagant to-night," said Dolly, "because we owe it to Dromedary to celebrate. But from to-night on we must save. We've had an awful lesson. What happened to us last month must never happen again. We were down to a two-dollar bill. Now we have twenty-five hundred across the street, and you have several hundreds in your pocket. On that we can live easily for a year. Meanwhile, you can write 'the' great American novel without having to worry about money, or to look for a steady job. And then your book will come out, and you will be famous, and rich, and _____"

"Passing on from that," interrupted Carter, "the thing of first importance is to get you out of that hot, beastly flat. I propose we start to-morrow for Cape Cod. I know a lot of fishing villages there where we could board and lodge for twelve dollars a week, and row and play tennis and live in our bathing suits."

Dolly assented with enthusiasm, and during the courses of the dinner they happily discussed Cape Cod from Pocasset to Yarmouth, and from Sandwich to Provincetown. So eager were they to escape, that Carter telephoned the hallman at his club to secure a cabin for the next afternoon on the Fall River boat. As they sat over their coffee in the cool breeze, with, in the air, the scent of flowers and the swing of music, and with, at their feet, the lights of the great city, the world seemed very bright.

"It has been a great day," sighed Carter. "And if I hadn't had nervous prostration I would have enjoyed it. That race-course is always cool, and there were some fine finishes. I noticed two horses that would bear watching, Her Highness and Glowworm. If we weren't leaving to-morrow, I'd be inclined——" Dolly regarded him with eyes of horror.

“Champneys Carter!” she exclaimed. As she said it, it sounded like “Great Jehoshaphat!”

Carter protested indignantly. “I only said,” he explained, “if I were following the races, I’d watch those horses. Don’t worry!” he exclaimed. “I know when to stop.”

The next morning they took breakfast on the tiny terrace of a restaurant overlooking Bryant Park, where, during the first days of their honeymoon, they had always breakfasted. For sentimental reasons they now revisited it. But Dolly was eager to return at once to the flat and pack, and Carter seemed distraught. He explained that he had had a bad night.

“I’m so sorry,” sympathized Dolly, “but to-night you will have a fine sleep going up the Sound. Any more nightmares?” she asked.

“Nightmares!” exploded Carter fiercely. “Nightmares they certainly were! I dreamt two of the nightmares won! I saw them, all night, just as I saw Dromedary, Her Highness and Glowworm, winning, winning, winning!”

“Those were the horses you spoke about last night,” said Dolly severely. “After so wonderful a day, of course you dreamt of racing, and those two horses were in your mind. That’s the explanation.”

They returned to the flat and began, industriously, to pack. About twelve o’clock Carter, coming suddenly into the bedroom where Dolly was alone, found her reading the MORNING TELEGRAPH. It was open at the racing page of “past performances.”

She dropped the paper guiltily. Carter kicked a hat-box out of his way and sat down on a trunk.

“I don’t see,” he began, “why we can’t wait one more day. We’d be just as near the ocean at Sheepshead Bay race-track as on a Fall River boat, and——” He halted and frowned unhappily. “We needn’t bet more than ten dollars,” he begged.

“Of course,” declared Dolly, “if they SHOULD win, you’ll always blame ME!” Carter’s eyes shone hopefully.

“And,” continued Dolly, “I can’t bear to have you blame me. So
_____”

“Get your hat!” shouted Carter, “or we’ll miss the first race.”

Carter telephoned for a cab, and as they were entering it said guiltily: “I’ve got to stop at the bank.”

“You have NOT!” announced Dolly. “That money is to keep us alive while you write the great American novel. I’m glad to spend another day at the races, and I’m willing to back your dreams as far as ten dollars, but for no more.”

“If my dreams come true,” warned Carter, “you’ll be awfully sorry.”

“Not I,” said Dolly. “I’ll merely send you to bed, and you can go on dreaming.”

When Her Highness romped home, an easy winner, the look Dolly turned upon her husband was one both of fear and dismay.

“I don’t like it!” she gasped. “It’s—it’s uncanny. It gives me a creepy feeling. It makes you seem sort of supernatural. And oh,” she cried, “if only I had let you bet all you had with you!”

“I did,” stammered Carter, in extreme agitation. “I bet four hundred. I got five to one, Dolly,” he gasped, in awe; “we’ve won two thousand dollars.”

Dolly exclaimed rapturously: “We’ll put it all in bank,” she cried.

“We’ll put it all on Glowworm!” said her husband.

“Champ!” begged Dolly. “Don’t push your luck. Stop while——” Carter shook his head.

“It’s NOT luck!” he growled. “It’s a gift, it’s second sight, it’s prophecy. I’ve been a full-fledged clairvoyant all my life, and didn’t know it. Anyway, I’m a sport, and after two of my dreams breaking right, I’ve got to back the third one!”

Glowworm was at ten to one, and at those odds the book-makers to whom he first applied did not care to take so large a sum as he offered. Carter found a book-maker named "Sol" Burbank who, at those odds, accepted his two thousand.

When Carter returned to collect his twenty-two thousand, there was some little delay while Burbank borrowed a portion of it. He looked at Carter curiously and none too genially.

"Wasn't it you," he asked, "that had that thirty-to-one shot yesterday on Dromedary?" Carter nodded somewhat guiltily. A man in the crowd volunteered: "And he had Her Highness in the second, too, for four hundred."

"You've made a good day," said Burbank. "Give me a chance to get my money back to-morrow.

"I'm sorry," said Carter. "I'm leaving New York to-morrow."

The same scarlet car bore them back triumphant to the bank.

"Twenty-two thousand dollars?" gasped Carter, "in CASH! How in the name of all that's honest can we celebrate winning twenty-two thousand dollars? We can't eat more than one dinner; we can't drink more than two quarts of champagne—not without serious results."

"I'll tell you what we can do!" cried Dolly excitedly. "We can sail to-morrow on the CAMPANIA!"

"Hurrah!" shouted Carter. "We'll have a second honey-moon. We'll shoot up London and Paris. We'll tear slices out of the map of Europe. You'll ride in one motor-car, I'll ride in another, we'll have a maid and a valet in a third, and we'll race each other all the way to Monte Carlo. And, there, I'll dream of the winning numbers, and we'll break the bank. When does the CAMPANIA sail?"

"At noon," said Dolly.

"At eight we will be on board," said Carter.

But that night in his dreams he saw King Pepper, Confederate, and Red Wing each win a race. And in the morning neither the engines of the

CAMPANIA nor the entreaties of Dolly could keep him from the race-track.

“I want only six thousand,” he protested. “You can do what you like with the rest, but I am going to bet six thousand on the first one of those three to start. If he loses, I give you my word I’ll not bet another cent, and we’ll sail on Saturday. If he wins Out, I’ll put all I make on the two others.”

“Can’t you see,” begged Dolly, “that your dreams are just a rehash of what you think during the day? You have been playing in wonderful luck, that’s all. Each of those horses is likely to win his race. When he does you will have more faith than ever in your silly dreams——”

“My silly dreams,” said Carter grinning, “are carrying you to Europe, first class, by the next steamer.”

They had been talking while on their way to the bank. When Dolly saw she could not alter his purpose, she made him place the nineteen thousand that remained, after he had taken out the six thousand, in her name. She then drew out the entire amount.

“You told me,” said Dolly, smiling anxiously, “I could do what I liked with it. Maybe I have dreams also. Maybe I mean to back them.”

She drove away, mysteriously refusing to tell him what she intended to do. When they met at luncheon, she was still much excited, still bristling with a concealed secret.

“Did you back your dream?” asked Carter.

Dolly nodded happily.

“And when am I to know?”

“You will read of it,” said Dolly, “to-morrow, in the morning papers. It’s all quite correct. My lawyers arranged it.”

“Lawyers!” gasped her husband. “You’re not arranging to lock me in a private madhouse, are you?”

“No,” laughed Dolly; “but when I told them how I intended to invest the money they came near putting me there.”

“Didn’t they want to know how you suddenly got so rich?” asked Carter.

“They did. I told them it came from my husband’s ‘books’! It was a very ‘near’ false-hood.”

“It was worse,” said Carter. “It was a very poor pun.”

As in their honey-moon days they drove proudly to the track, and when Carter had placed Dolly in a box large enough for twenty, he pushed his way into the crowd around the stand of “Sol” Burbank. That veteran of the turf welcomed him gladly.

“Coming to give me my money back?” he called.

“No, to take some away,” said Carter, handing him his six thousand.

Without apparently looking at it, Burbank passed it to his cashier. “King Pepper, twelve to six thousand,” he called.

When King Pepper won, and Carter moved around the ring with eighteen thousand dollars in thousand and five hundred dollar bills in his fist, he found himself beset by a crowd of curious, eager “pikers.” They both impeded his operations and acted as a body-guard. Confederate was an almost prohibitive favorite at one to three, and in placing eighteen thousand that he might win six, Carter found little difficulty. When Confederate won, and he started with his twenty-four thousand to back Red Wing, the crowd now engulfed him. Men and boys who when they wagered five and ten dollars were risking their all, found in the sight of a young man offering bets in hundreds and thousands a thrilling and fascinating spectacle.

To learn what horse he was playing and at what odds, racing touts and runners for other book-makers and individual speculators leaped into the mob that surrounded him, and then, squirming their way out, ran shrieking down the line. In ten minutes, through the bets of Carter and those that backed his luck, the odds against Red Wing were forced down from fifteen to one to even money. His approach was hailed by the book-makers

either with jeers or with shouts of welcome. Those who had lost demanded a chance to regain their money. Those with whom he had not bet, found in that fact consolation, and chaffed the losers. Some curtly refused even the smallest part of his money.

“Not with me!” they laughed. From stand to stand the layers of odds taunted him, or each other. “Don’t touch it, it’s tainted!” they shouted. “Look out, Joe, he’s the Jonah man?” Or, “Come at me again!” they called. “And, once more!” they challenged as they reached for a thousand-dollar bill.

And, when in time, each shook his head and grumbled: “That’s all I want,” or looked the other way, the mob around Carter jeered.

“He’s fought ‘em to a stand-still!” they shouted jubilantly. In their eyes a man who alone was able and willing to wipe the name of a horse off the blackboards was a hero.

To the horror of Dolly, instead of watching the horses parade past, the crowd gathered in front of her box and pointed and stared at her. From the club-house her men friends and acquaintances invaded it.

“Has Carter gone mad?” they demanded. “He’s dealing out thousand-dollar bills like cigarettes. He’s turned the ring into a wheat Pit!”

When he reached the box a sun-burned man in a sombrero blocked his way.

“I’m the owner of Red Wing,” he explained, “bred him and trained him myself. I know he’ll be lucky if he gets the place. You’re backing him in thousands to WIN. What do you know about him?”

“Know he will win,” said Carter.

The veteran commissioner of the club stand buttonholed him. “Mr. Carter,” he begged, “why don’t you bet through me? I’ll give you as good odds as they will in that ring. You don’t want your clothes torn off you and your money taken from you.”

“They haven’t taken such a lot of it yet,” said Carter.

When Red Wing won, the crowd beneath the box, the men in the box, and the people standing around it, most of whom had followed Carter's plunge, cheered and fell over him, to shake hands and pound him on the back. From every side excited photographers pointed cameras, and Lander's band played: "Every Little Bit Added to What You've Got Makes Just a Little Bit More." As he left the box to collect his money, a big man with a brown mustache and two smooth-shaven giants closed in around him, as tackles interfere for the man who has the ball. The big man took him by the arm. Carter shook himself free.

"What's the idea?" he demanded.

"I'm Pinkerton," said the big man genially. "You need a body-guard. If you've got an empty seat in your car, I'll drive home with you. From Cavanaugh they borrowed a book-maker's hand-bag and stuffed it with thousand-dollar bills. When they stepped into the car the crowd still surrounded them.

"He's taking it home in a trunk!" they yelled.

That night the "sporting extras" of the afternoon papers gave prominence to the luck at the races of Champneys Carter. From Cavanaugh and the book-makers, the racing reporters had gathered accounts of his winnings. They stated that in three successive days, starting with one hundred dollars, he had at the end of the third day not lost a single bet, and that afternoon, on the last race alone, he had won sixty to seventy thousand dollars. With the text, they "ran" pictures of Carter at the track, of Dolly in her box, and of Mrs. Ingram in a tiara and ball-dress.

Mother-in-law WILL be pleased cried Carter. In some alarm as to what the newspapers might say on the morrow, he ordered that in the morning a copy of each be sent to his room. That night in his dreams he saw clouds of dust-covered jackets and horses with sweating flanks, and one of them named Ambitious led all the rest. When he woke, he said to Dolly: "That horse Ambitious will win to-day."

"He can do just as he likes about THAT!" replied Dolly. "I have something on my mind much more important than horse-racing. To-day you are to learn how I spent your money. It's to be in the morning papers."

When he came to breakfast, Dolly was on her knees. For his inspection she had spread the newspapers on the floor, opened at an advertisement that appeared in each. In the Centre of a half-page of white paper were the lines:

SOLD OUT IN ONE DAY!
ENTIRE FIRST EDITION
THE DEAD HEAT
BY
CHAMPNEYS CARTER

SECOND EDITION ONE HUNDRED THOUSAND

“In Heaven’s name!” roared Carter. “What does this mean?”

“It means,” cried Dolly tremulously, “I’m backing my dream. I’ve always believed in your book. Now, I’m backing it. Our lawyers sent me to an advertising agent. His name is Spink, and he is awfully clever. I asked him if he could advertise a book so as to make it sell. He said with my money and his ideas he could sell last year’s telephone book to people who did not own a telephone, and who had never learned to read. He is proud of his ideas. One of them was buying out the first edition. Your publishers told him your book was ‘waste paper,’ and that he could have every copy in stock for the cost of the plates. So he bought the whole edition. That’s how it was sold out in one day. Then we ordered a second edition of one hundred thousand, and they’re printing it now.

“The presses have been working all night to meet the demand!”

“But,” cried Carter, “there isn’t any demand!”

“There will be,” said Dolly, “when five million people read our advertisements.”

She dragged him to the window and pointed triumphantly into the street.

“See that!” she said. “Mr. Spink sent them here for me to inspect.”

Drawn up in a line that stretched from Fifth Avenue to Broadway were an army of sandwich men. On the boards they carried were the words:

“Read ‘The Dead Heat.’ Second Edition. One Hundred Thousand!” On the fence in front of the building going up across the street, in letters a foot high, Carter again read the name of his novel. In letters in size more modest, but in colors more defiant, it glared at him from ash-cans and barrels.

“How much does this cost?” he gasped.

“It cost every dollar you had in bank,” said Dolly, “and before we are through it will cost you twice as much more. Mr. Spink is only waiting to hear from me before he starts spending fifty thousand dollars; that’s only half of what you won on Red Wing. I’m only waiting for you to make me out a check before I tell Spink to start spending it.”

In a dazed state Carter drew a check for fifty thousand dollars and meekly handed it to his wife. They carried it themselves to the office of Mr. Spink. On their way, on every side they saw evidences of his handiwork. On walls, on scaffolding, on bill-boards were advertisements of “The Dead Heat.” Over Madison Square a huge kite as large as a Zeppelin air-ship painted the name of the book against the sky, on “dodgers” it floated in the air, on handbills it stared up from the gutters.

Mr. Spink was a nervous young man with a bald head and eye-glasses. He grasped the check as a general might welcome fifty thousand fresh troops.

“Reinforcements!” he cried. “Now, watch me. Now I can do things that are big, national, Napoleonic. We can’t get those books bound inside of a week, but meanwhile orders will be pouring in, people will be growing crazy for it. Every man, woman, and child in Greater New York will want a copy. I’ve sent out fifty boys dressed as jockeys on horseback to ride neck and neck up and down every avenue. ‘The Dead Heat’ is printed on the saddle-cloth. Half of them have been arrested already. It’s a little idea of my own.”

“But,” protested Carter, “it’s not a racing story, it’s a detective story!”

“The devil it is!” gasped Spink. “But what’s the difference!” he exclaimed. “They’ve got to buy it anyway. They’d buy it if it was a cook-

book. And, I say," he cried delightedly, "that's great press work you're doing for the book at the races! The papers are full of you this morning, and every man who reads about your luck at the track will see your name as the author of 'The Dead Heat,' and will rush to buy the book. He'll think 'The Dead Heat' is a guide to the turf!"

When Carter reached the track he found his notoriety had preceded him. Ambitious did not run until the fourth race, and until then, as he sat in his box, an eager crowd surged below. He had never known such popularity. The crowd had read the newspapers, and such head-lines as "He Cannot Lose!" "Young Carter Wins \$70,000!" "Boy Plunger Wins Again!" "Carter Makes Big Killing!" "The Ring Hit Hard!" "The Man Who Cannot Lose!" "Carter Beats Book-makers!" had whetted their curiosity and filled many with absolute faith in his luck. Men he had not seen in years grasped him by the hand and carelessly asked if he could tell of something good. Friends old and new begged him to dine with them, to immediately have a drink with them, at least to "try" a cigar. Men who protested they had lost their all begged for just a hint which would help them to come out even, and every one, without exception, assured him he was going to buy his latest book.

"I tried to get it last night at a dozen news-stands," many of them said, "but they told me the entire edition was exhausted."

The crowd of hungry-eyed race-goers waiting below the box, and watching Carter's every movement, distressed Dolly.

"I hate it!" she cried. "They look at you like a lot of starved dogs begging for a bone. Let's go home; we don't want to make any more money, and we may lose what we have. And I want it all to advertise the book."

"If you're not careful," said Carter, "some one will buy that book and read it, and then you and Spink will have to take shelter in a cyclone cellar."

When he arose to make his bet on Ambitious, his friends from the club stand and a half-dozen of Pinkerton's men closed in around him and in a flying wedge pushed into the ring. The news-papers had done their work, and he was instantly surrounded by a hungry, howling mob. In comparison

with the one of the previous day, it was as a foot-ball scrimmage to a run on a bank. When he made his first wager and the crowd learned the name of the horse, it broke with a yell into hundreds of flying missiles which hurled themselves at the book-makers. Under their attack, as on the day before, Ambitious receded to even money. There was hardly a person at the track who did not back the luck of the man who "could not lose." And when Ambitious won easily, it was not the horse or the jockey that was cheered, but the young man in the box.

In New York the extras had already announced that he was again lucky, and when Dolly and Carter reached the bank they found the entire staff on hand to receive him and his winnings. They amounted to a sum so magnificent that Carter found for the rest of their lives the interest would furnish Dolly and himself an income upon which they could live modestly and well.

A distinguished-looking, white-haired official of the bank congratulated Carter warmly. "Should you wish to invest some of this," he said, "I should be glad to advise you. My knowledge in that direction may be wider than your own."

Carter murmured his thanks. The white-haired gentleman lowered his voice. "On certain other subjects," he continued, "you know many things of which I am totally ignorant. Could you tell me," he asked carelessly, "who will win the Suburban to-morrow?"

Carter frowned mysteriously. "I can tell you better in the morning," he said. "It looks like Beldame, with Proper and First Mason within call."

The white-haired man showed his surprise and also that his ignorance was not as profound as he suggested.

"I thought the Keene entry——" he ventured.

"I know," said Carter doubtfully. "If it were for a mile, I would say Delhi, but I don't think he can last the distance. In the morning I'll wire you."

As they settled back in their car, Carter took both of Dolly's hands in his. "So far as money goes," he said, "we are independent of your mother

—independent of my books; and I want to make you a promise. I want to promise you that, no matter what I dream in the future, I'll never back another horse." Dolly gave a gasp of satisfaction.

"And what's more," added Carter hastily, "not another dollar can you risk in backing my books. After this, they've got to stand or fall on their legs!"

"Agreed!" cried Dolly. "Our plunging days are over."

When they reached the flat they found waiting for Carter the junior partner of a real publishing house. He had a blank contract, and he wanted to secure the right to publish Carter's next book.

"I have a few short stories——" suggested Carter.

Collections of short stories, protested the visitor truthfully, "do not sell. We would prefer another novel on the same lines as 'The Dead Heat.'"

"Have you read 'The Dead Heat'?" asked Carter.

"I have not," admitted the publisher, "but the next book by the same author is sure to——. We will pay in advance of royalties fifteen thousand dollars."

"Could you put that in writing?" asked Carter. When the publisher was leaving he said:

"I see your success in literature is equaled by your success at the races. Could you tell me what will win the Suburban?"

"I will send you a wire in the MORNING," said Carter.

They had arranged to dine with some friends and later to visit a musical comedy. Carter had changed his clothes, and, while he was waiting for Dolly to dress, was reclining in a huge arm-chair. The heat of the day, the excitement, and the wear on his nerves caused his head to sink back, his eyes to close, and his limbs to relax.

When, by her entrance, Dolly woke him, he jumped up in some confusion.

"You've been asleep," she mocked.

“Worse!” said Carter. “I’ve been dreaming! Shall I tell you who is going to win the Suburban?”

“Champneys!” cried Dolly in alarm.

“My dear Dolly,” protested her husband, “I promised to stop betting. I did not promise to stop sleeping.”

“Well,” sighed Dolly, with relief, “as long as it stops at that. Delhi will win,” she added. “Delhi will not,” said Carter. “This is how they will finish——” He scribbled three names on a piece of paper which Dolly read.

“But that,” she said, “is what you told the gentleman at the bank.”

Carter stared at her blankly and in some embarrassment.

“You see!” cried Dolly, “what you think when you’re awake, you dream when you’re asleep. And you had a run of luck that never happened before and could never happen again.”

Carter received her explanation with reluctance. “I wonder,” he said.

On arriving at the theatre they found their host had reserved a stage-box, and as there were but four in their party, and as, when they entered, the house lights were up, their arrival drew upon them the attention both of those in the audience and of those on the stage. The theatre was crowded to its capacity, and in every part were people who were habitual race-goers, as well as many racing men who had come to town for the Suburban. By these, as well as by many others who for three days had seen innumerable pictures of him, Carter was instantly recognized. To the audience and to the performers the man who always won was of far greater interest than what for the three-hundredth night was going forward on the stage. And when the leading woman, Blanche Winter, asked the comedian which he would rather be, “The Man Who Broke the Bank at Monte Carlo or the Man Who Can Not Lose?” she gained from the audience an easy laugh and from the chorus an excited giggle.

When, at the end of the act, Carter went into the lobby to smoke, he was so quickly surrounded that he sought refuge on Broadway. From there, the crowd still following him, he was driven back into his box.

Meanwhile, the interest shown in him had not been lost upon the press agent of the theatre, and he at once telephoned to the newspaper offices that Plunger Carter, the book-maker breaker, was at that theatre, and if that the newspapers wanted a chance to interview him on the probable out-come of the classic handicap to be run on the morrow, he, the press agent, would unselfishly assist them. In answer to these hurry calls, reporters of the Ten o’Clock Club assembled in the foyer. How far what later followed was due to their presence and to the efforts of the press agent only that gentleman can tell. It was in the second act that Miss Blanche Winter sang her topical song. In it she advised the audience when anxious to settle any question of personal or national interest to “Put it up to the Man in the Moon.” This night she introduced a verse in which she told of her desire to know which horse on the morrow would win the Suburban, and, in the chorus, expressed her determination to “Put it up to the Man in the Moon.”

Instantly from the back of the house a voice called: “Why don’t you put it up to the Man in the Box?” Miss Winter laughed—the audience laughed; all eyes were turned toward Carter. As though the idea pleased them, from different parts of the house people applauded heartily. In embarrassment, Carter shoved back his chair and pulled the curtain of the box between him and the audience. But he was not so easily to escape. Leaving the orchestra to continue unheeded with the prelude to the next verse, Miss Winter walked slowly and deliberately toward him, smiling mischievously. In burlesque entreaty, she held out her arms. She made a most appealing and charming picture, and of that fact she was well aware. In a voice loud enough to reach every part of the house, she addressed herself to Carter:

“Won’t you tell ME?” she begged.

Carter, blushing unhappily, shrugged his shoulders in apology.

With a wave of her hand Miss Winter designated the audience. “Then,” she coaxed, reproachfully, “won’t you tell THEM?”

Again, instantly, with a promptness and unanimity that sounded suspiciously as though it came from ushers well rehearsed, several voice echoed her petition: “Give us all a chance!” shouted one. “Don’t keep the good things to yourself!” reproached another. “I want to get rich, TOO!”

wailed a third. In his heart, Carter prayed they would choke. But the audience, so far from resenting the interruptions, encouraged them, and Carter's obvious discomfort added to its amusement. It proceeded to assail him with applause, with appeals, with commands to "speak up."

The hand-clapping became general—insistent. The audience would not be denied. Carter turned to Dolly. In the recesses of the box she was enjoying his predicament. His friends also were laughing at him. Indignant at their desertion, Carter grinned vindictively. "All right," he muttered over his shoulder. "Since you think it's funny, I'll show you!" He pulled his pencil from his watch-chain and, spreading his programme on the ledge of the box, began to write.

From the audience there rose a murmur of incredulity, of surprise, of excited interest. In the rear of the house the press agent, after one startled look, doubled up in an ecstasy of joy. "We've landed him!" he gasped. "We've landed him. He's going to fall for it!"

Dolly frantically clasped her husband by the coat-tail.

"Champ!" she implored, "what are you doing?"

Quite calmly, quite confidently, Carter rose. Leaning forward with a nod and a smile, he presented the programme to the beautiful Miss Winter. That lady all but snatched at it. The spot-light was full in her eyes. Turning her back that she might the more easily read, she stood for a moment, her pretty figure trembling with eagerness, her pretty eyes bent upon the programme. The house had grown suddenly still, and with an excited gesture, the leader of the orchestra commanded the music to silence. A man, bursting with impatience, broke the tense quiet. "Read it!" he shouted.

In a frightened voice that in the sudden hush held none of its usual confidence, Miss Winter read slowly: "The favorite cannot last the distance. Will lead for the mile and give way to Beldame. Proper takes the place. First Mason will show. Beldame will win by a length."

Before she had ceased reading, a dozen men had struggled to their feet and a hundred voice were roaring at her. "Read that again!" the chorused. Once more Miss Winter read the message, but before she had

finished half of those in the front rows were scrambling from their seats and racing up the aisles. Already the reporters were ahead of them, and in the neighborhood not one telephone booth was empty. Within five minutes, in those hotels along the White Way where sporting men are wont to meet, betting commissioners and hand-book men were suddenly assaulted by breathless gentlemen, some in evening dress, some without collars, and some without hats, but all with money to bet against the favorite. And, an hour later, men, bent under stacks of newspaper "extras," were vomited from the subway stations into the heart of Broadway, and in raucous tones were shrieking, "Winner of the Suburban," sixteen hours before that race was run. That night to every big newspaper office from Maine to California, was flashed the news that Plunger Carter, in a Broadway theatre, had announced that the favorite for the Suburban would be beaten, and, in order, had named the three horses that would first finish.

Up and down Broadway, from rathskellers to roof-gardens, in cafes and lobster palaces, on the corners of the cross-roads, in clubs and all-night restaurants, Carter's tip was as a red rag to a bull.

Was the boy drunk, they demanded, or had his miraculous luck turned his head? Otherwise, why would he so publicly utter a prophecy that on the morrow must certainly smother him with ridicule. The explanations were varied. The men in the clubs held he was driven by a desire for notoriety, the men in the street that he was more clever than they guessed, and had made the move to suit his own book, to alter the odds to his own advantage. Others frowned mysteriously. With superstitious faith in his luck, they pointed to his record. "Has he ever lost a bet? How do WE know what HE knows?" they demanded. "Perhaps it's fixed and he knows it!"

The "wise" ones howled in derision. "A Suburban FIXED!" they retorted. "You can fix ONE jockey, you can fix TWO; but you can't fix sixteen jockeys! You can't fix Belmont, you can't fix Keene. There's nothing in his picking Beldame, but only a crazy man would pick the horse for the place and to show, and shut out the favorite! The boy ought to be in Matteawan."

Still undisturbed, still confident to those to whom he had promised them, Carter sent a wire. Nor did he forget his old enemy, "Sol" Burbank.

“If you want to get some of the money I took,” he telegraphed, “wipe out the Belmont entry and take all they offer on Delhi. He cannot win.”

And that night, when each newspaper called him up at his flat, he made the same answer. “The three horses will finish as I said. You can state that I gave the information as I did as a sort of present to the people of New York City.”

In the papers the next morning “Carter’s Tip” was the front-page feature. Even those who never in the racing of horses felt any concern could not help but take in the outcome of this one a curious interest. The audacity of the prophecy, the very absurdity of it, presupposing, as it did, occult power, was in itself amusing. And when the curtain rose on the Suburban it was evident that to thousands what the Man Who Could Not Lose had foretold was a serious and inspired utterance.

This time his friends gathered around him, not to benefit by his advice, but to protect him. “They’ll mob you!” they warned. “They’ll tear the clothes off your back. Better make your getaway now.”

Dolly, with tears in her eyes, sat beside him. Every now and again she touched his hand. Below his box, as around a newspaper office on the night when a president is elected, the people crushed in a turbulent mob. Some mocked and jeered, some who on his tip had risked their every dollar, hailed him hopefully. On every side policemen, fearful of coming trouble, hemmed him in. Carter was bored extremely, heartily sorry he had on the night before given way to what he now saw as a perverse impulse. But he still was confident, still undismayed.

To all eyes, except those of Dolly, he was of all those at the track the least concerned. To her he turned and, in a low tone, spoke swiftly. “I am so sorry,” he begged. “But, indeed, indeed, I can’t lose. You must have faith in me.”

“In you, yes,” returned Dolly in a whisper, “but in your dreams, no!”

The horses were passing on their way to the post. Carter brought his face close to hers.

“I’m going to break my promise,” he said, “and make one more bet, this one with you. I bet you a kiss that I’m right.”

Dolly, holding back her tears, smiled mournfully. “Make it a hundred,” she said.

Half of the forty thousand at the track had backed Delhi, the other half, following Carter’s luck and his confidence in proclaiming his convictions, had backed Beldame. Many hundred had gone so far as to bet that the three horses he had named would finish as he had foretold. But, in spite of Carter’s tip, Delhi still was the favorite, and when the thousands saw the Keene polka-dots leap to the front, and by two lengths stay there, for the quarter, the half, and for the three-quarters, the air was shattered with jubilant, triumphant yells. And then suddenly, with the swiftness of a moving picture, in the very moment of his victory, Beldame crept up on the favorite, drew alongside, drew ahead passed him, and left him beaten. It was at the mile.

The night before a man had risen in a theatre and said to two thousand people: “The favorite will lead for the mile, and give way to Beldame.” Could they have believed him, the men who now cursed themselves might for the rest of their lives have lived upon their winnings. Those who had followed his prophecy faithfully, superstitiously, now shrieked in happy, riotous self-congratulation. “At the MILE!” they yelled. “He TOLD you, at the MILE!” They turned toward Carter and shook Panama hats at him. “Oh, you Carter!” they shrieked lovingly.

It was more than a race the crowd was watching now, it was the working out of a promise. And when Beldame stood off Proper’s rush, and Proper fell to second, and First Mason followed three lengths in the rear, and in that order they flashed under the wire, the yells were not that a race had been won, but that a prophecy had been fulfilled.

Of the thousands that cheered Carter and fell upon him and indeed did tear his clothes off his back, one of his friends alone was sufficiently unselfish to think of what it might, mean to Carter.

“Champ!” roared his friend, pounding him on both shoulders. “You old wizard! I win ten thousand! How much do you win?”

Carter cast a swift glance at Dolly. He said, “I win much more than that.”

And Dolly, raising her eyes to his, nodded and smiled contentedly.

Noon

After all, it is no fun posing at being a man. It is not, as you would inform the other boys, the pleasant sinecure that it is currently presumed to be, amongst your kind. The picture has more depth than appears at the distance. As you approach, you note only the surface tints; but when you have arrived, then begin to unfold aspects previously quite unsuspected.

So now, having had experience, you fain would turn back, and doffing for all time those starchy, heavy, strait-jacket garments which you have mistakenly donned, you would resume the free-and-easy blouse and knickerbockers and tattered brim, and would rejoin your gay brethren of school and vacation. You have learned your lesson, and you will leave them no more.

So be it. But alas, unavailingly you stop on your way down-town, beside the vacant lot where the other boys are playing ball, and look wistfully in upon them. None yells:

“Come on, Jocko. You’re tenth fielder.”

Once the ball rolls your way. You toss it back—toss it awkwardly, somehow, proving that you are out of practice. However, you can limber up right speedily. You have been away, they should know.

“Aw, you’re out! You’re out! You are too! Ask that man. He’s out, ain’t he, Mister?”

You wait for “that man,” wherever he may be, to reply. But you yourself are the sole spectator, and you gaze right and left, puzzled.

“He’s out—ain’t he!”

You! It is you to whom they are appealing! You nod, confusedly.

“Ya-a-a! The man says you’re out!”

The man! The word gives you a little shock. They are styling you “man”! A sensation of disappointment and surprise sweeps through you; here you are, Rip Van Winkle, whom nobody knows. If only these your

former cronies might see through and recognize what lies behind this thin disguise, they would realize that you really are but ten, and one of them.

All in the broad sun the other boys are “goin’ fishin’.” It is a prime day. Your being tingles for the poise of the trusty old pole upon your shoulder, and the feel of the fat bait-can in your jacket pocket. Hang business! You repudiate its tyranny. That “engagement” may importune, in vain. The perch are running, the kids are “all catchin’ ’em,” “fishin’” is “dandy.” Hurrah! The old-time *wanderlust* is stirring in your veins. You will go. But—something holds you back. It will not be much fun to fish alone. Something tells you that even though you “fire” your shoes and stockings and strip to shirt and trousers, and boldly enter the fray, still will you be an alien, and looked upon askance. You are a “man,” and perch and bullheads are not for the likes of you.

Nevertheless, you can try. There hastens Hen—or, at least, one who might be Hen—pattering down the street, all accoutered for the ranks of joy and rivalry.

“Goin’ fishin’?” you demand bluffly.

“Yes, sir.”

“Sir!” In a word has he relegated you to your place. He knows you—knows that you have no fish-worms in your pocket, and that to match his mighty pole you have only a paltry jointed “rod.”

He pauses impatiently. He has little time to waste with you.

“Any good?”

“Yes, sir.”

Irksomely respectful, now with a wriggle he is off, onward into his magic realms, leaving you to gaze after, chastened, chagrined.

Oh, this hideous disguise—this iron metamorphosis which wizard Time, the inexorable, has laid upon you! There is no dropping it.

You turn to Nature; surely Nature has the acumen to recognize that you have grown not at all, save, perhaps, in stature. But the sun burns, the rain wets, the snow chills—each uncompromising and austere. The pond

that once stretched away like an ocean shrinks and shallows at your coming, till you can almost step from bank to bank; the once limitless wood, as wild and as romantic as the Carpathians, mischievously contracts so that you can see through from side to side; the highroad is dusty, and the paths refuse to lead, but are finished in a stride. Everything conspires to remind you that you are foreign, Brobdingnagian, a personage apart, and that too late have you faced about.

To the pleasures and to the favors that were you have forfeited the “Open, sesame!”

You may not reinstate yourself by the company that you keep, for the company of old—where is it? Vanished; changed, like yourself; resistlessly urged on and ever on by the current which there is no stemming. Hen is a “man”—he runs a grocery store. Billy Lunt is a “man”—and an M.D., to boot. “Fat” Day is a “man”—even an alderman. “Snoopie” Mitchell, aye, the independent, envied Snoopie, whom naught, you believed, could coerce, is a “man”—for sometimes you are whirled along behind his engine. They all seem to glory in their estate and its attributes. And to them, *you* are a “man.”

Exists only one authority to support your quest of boyhood; only one heart, besides your own, which apparently would be glad to have you again in blouse and knickerbockers; and to her you are still a boy, with the freckles concealed, merely, by that pointed beard at which she gently rails even in her pride. Mother! You can depend upon mother, as of yore. She is no older, herself; she is the same. Mother never changes. You are no older, yourself; you are the same. Let the other boys call you “man” and say “sir”; let sun and rain and snow, and pond and wood and path, deny you their one-time hospitality. To all the world without you may be a “man,” but to mother you are her “boy.”

Yet Time, forsooth, wrests even this anchorage from you. Comes an hour when, confronted by the inevitable, helpless in its grip, unreconciled even in your resignation, you dully stand by a bedside and wait—wait—wait.

Suddenly the eyes open and look up into yours with understanding. The graying, wrinkled face faintly smiles.

“What a great big boy you are getting to be, Johnny,” she murmurs, in vague surprise.

That is all. She is gone, and with her departs your last hold upon the things that were. Your morning is passed forever. It is noon. You must turn away, irrevocably the man.

Among the Climbing Roses

I could wish that the people with whom I have spent my summer would let their glance fall on these lines. Now when the cold, dark nights have come, I should like to carry their thoughts back to that bright, warm season.

Above all, I should like to remind them of the climbing-roses that enclosed the veranda, of the delicate, somewhat thin foliage of the clematis, which in the sunlight as well as in the moonlight was drawn in dark gray shadows on the light gray stone floor and threw a light lace-like veil over everything, and of its big, bright blossoms with their ragged edges.

Other summers remind me of fields of clover, or of birch-woods, or of apple-trees and berry bushes, but that summer took its character from the climbing-roses. The bright, delicate buds, that could resist neither wind nor rain, the light, waving, pale-green shoots, the soft, bending stems, the exuberant richness of blossoms, the gaily humming hosts of insects, all follow me and rise up before me in their glory, when I think of that summer, that rosy, delicate, dainty summer.

Now, when the time for work has come, people often ask me how I passed my summer. Then everything glides from my memory, and it seems to me as if I had sat day in and day out on the veranda behind the climbing roses and breathed in fragrance and sunshine. What did I do? Oh, I watched others work.

There was a little upholsterer bee which worked from morning till night, from night till morning. From the soft, green leaves it sawed out a neat little oval with its sharp jaws, rolled it together as one rolls up a real carpet, and with the precious burden pressed to it, it fluttered away to the park and lighted on an old tree stump. There it burrowed down through dark passage-ways and mysterious galleries, until at last it reached the bottom of a perpendicular shaft. In its unknown depths, where neither ant nor centipede ever had ventured, it spread out the green leaf roll and covered the uneven floor with the most beautiful carpet. And when the floor was covered, the bee came back for new leaves to cover the walls of the shaft,

and worked so quickly and eagerly, that there was soon not a leaf in the rose hedge that did not have an oval hole which bore testimony that it had been forced to assist in the adorning of the old tree-stump.

One fine day the little bee changed its occupation. It bored deep in among the ragged petals of the full-blown roses, sucked and drank all it could in those beautiful larders, and when it had got its fill, it flew quickly away to the old stump to fill the freshly-papered chambers with brightest honey.

The little upholsterer bee was not the only one who worked in the rose-bushes. There was also a spider, a quite unparalleled spider. It was bigger than any spider I have ever seen; it was bright orange with a clearly marked cross on its back, and it had eight long, red-and-white striped legs, all equally well marked. You ought to have seen it spin! Every thread was drawn out with the greatest precision from the first ones that were only for supports to the last fine connecting thread. And you should have seen it balance its way along the slender threads to seize a fly or to take its place in the middle of the web, motionless, patient, waiting for hours.

That big, orange spider won my heart; he was so patient and so wise. Every day he had his little encounter with the upholsterer bee, and he always came out of the affair with the same unfailing tact. The bee who took his way close by him caught time and time again in his net. Instantly it began to buzz and tear; it dragged at the fine web and behaved like a mad thing, which naturally resulted in its being more and more entangled and getting both legs and wings wound up in the sticky net.

As soon as the bee was exhausted and weakened, the spider came creeping out to it. It kept always at a respectful distance, but with the extreme end of one of the beautiful, red striped legs it gave the bee a little push, so that it swung round in the web. When the bee had again buzzed and raged itself tired, it received another gentle shove, and then another and yet another, until it spun round like a top and did not know what it was doing in its fury, and became so confused that it could not defend itself. But during the whirling the threads that held it fast twisted ever more tightly, till the tension became so great that they broke, and the bee fell to the ground. Yes, that was what the spider had wished, of course.

And that performance could they repeat, those two, day after day as long as the bee had work in the rose-bushes. Never could the little bee learn to look out for the spider-web, and never did the spider show anger or impatience. I liked them both; the little, eager, furry worker, as well as the big, crafty, old hunter.

Very few great events happened in the garden of the climbing roses. Between the espaliers one could see the little lake lying and twinkling in the sunlight. And it was a lake which was too little and too shut in to be able to heave in real waves, but at every little ripple on the gray surface thousands of small sparkles that glistened and played on the waves flew up; it seemed as if its depths had been full of fire that could not get out. And it was the same with the summer life there; it was usually so quiet, but if there came the slightest, little ripple—oh, how it could shine and glitter!

We needed nothing great to make us happy. A flower or a bird could make us merry for several hours, not to speak of the upholsterer bee. I shall never forget what pleasure I had once on his account.

The bee had been in the spider-web as usual, and the spider had as usual helped him out; but it had been fastened so securely that it had had to buzz a dreadfully long time and had been very tamed and subdued when it had flown away. I bent forward to see if the spider-web had suffered much damage. Fortunately it had not; but on the other hand a little yellow larva was caught in the web, a little threadlike monster, which consisted of only jaws and claws, and I was agitated, really agitated, at the sight of it.

I knew them, those May-bug larvae, that in thousands crawl up on the flowers and hide themselves under their petals. Did I not know them and yet admire them, those bold, cunning parasites, that sit hidden and wait, only wait, even if it is for weeks, until a bee comes, in whose yellow and black down they can hide. And did I not know their hateful skill just when the little cell-builder has filled a room with honey and on its surface laid the egg from which the rightful owner of the cell and the honey will come forth, just then to creep down on the egg and with careful balancing sit on it as on a boat; for if they should come down into the honey; they would drown. And while the bee covers the thimble-like cell with a green roof and

carefully shuts in its young one, the yellow larva tears open the egg with its sharp jaws and devours its contents, while the egg-shell has still to serve as craft on the dangerous honey-sea.

But gradually the little yellow larva grows flat and big and can swim by itself on the honey acid drink of it, and in the course of time a fat, black beetle comes out of the bee-cell. It is certain that this is not what the little bee wished to effect by its work, and however cunningly and cleverly the beetle may have behaved, it is nevertheless nothing but a lazy parasite, who deserves no sympathy.

And my bee, my own little, industrious bee, had flown about with such a yellow hanger-on in its down. But while the spider had spun round with it, the larva had loosened and fallen down on the spider-web, and now the big, orange spider came and gave it a bite and transformed it in a second into a skeleton without life or substance.

When the little bee came again, its humming was like a hymn to life.

"Oh, thou beauteous life," it said. "I thank thee that happy work among roses and sunshine has fallen to my lot. I thank thee that I can enjoy thee without anxiety or fear.

"Well I know that spiders lie in wait and beetles steal, but happy work is mine, and brave freedom from care. Oh, thou beauteous life, thou glorious existence!"

Brockway's Hulk

I first saw Brockway's towards the close of a cold October day. Since early morning I had been tramping and sketching about the northern suburbs of New York, and it was late in the afternoon when I reached the edge of that high ground overlooking the two rivers. I could see through an opening in the woods the outline of the great aqueduct,—a huge stone centipede stepping across on its sturdy legs; the broad Hudson, with its sheer walls of rock, and the busy Harlem crowded with boats and braced with bridges. A raw wind was blowing, and a gray mist blurred the edges of the Palisades where they cut against the sky.

As the darkness fell the wind increased, and scattered drops of rain, piloting the coming storm, warned me to seek a shelter. Shouldering my trap and hurrying forward, I descended the hill, followed the road to the East River, and, finding no boat, walked along the shore hoping to hail a fisherman or some belated oarsman, and reach the station opposite.

My search led me around a secluded cove edged with white sand and yellow marsh grass, ending in a low, jutting point. Here I came upon a curious sort of dwelling,—half house, half boat. It might have passed for an abandoned barge, or wharf boat, too rotten to float and too worthless to break up,—the relic and record of some by-gone tide of phenomenal height. When I approached nearer it proved to be an old-fashioned canal-boat, sunk to the water line in the grass, its deck covered by a low-hipped roof. Midway its length was cut a small door, opening upon a short staging or portico which supported one end of a narrow, rambling bridge leading to the shore. This bridge was built of driftwood propped up on shad poles. Over the door itself flapped a scrap of a tattered sail which served as an awning. Some pots of belated flowers bloomed on the sills of the ill-shaped windows, and a wind-beaten vine, rooted in a fish basket, crowded into the door, as if to escape the coming winter. Nothing could have been more dilapidated or more picturesque.

The only outward sign of life about the dwelling was a curl of blue smoke. Without this signal of good cheer it had a menacing look, as it lay in

its bed of mud glaring at me from under its eaves of eyebrows, shading eyes of windows a-glint in the fading light.

I crossed the small beach strewn with oyster shells, ascended the tottering bridge, and knocked. The door was opened by a gray-bearded old man in a rough jacket. He was bare-footed, his trousers rolled up above his ankles, like a boy's.

"Can you help me across the river?" I asked.

"Yes, perhaps I can. Come into the Hulk," he replied, holding the door against the gusts of wind.

The room was small and low, with doors leading into two others. In its centre, before a square stove, stood a young child cooking the evening meal. I saw no other inmates.

"You are wet," said the old man, laying his hand on my shoulder, feeling me over carefully; "come nearer the stove."

The child brought a chair. As I dropped into it I caught his eye fixed upon me intently.

"What are you?" he said abruptly, noting my glance,—*"a peddler."* He said this standing over me,—his arms akimbo, his bare feet spread apart.

"No, a painter," I answered smiling; my trap had evidently misled him.

He mused a little, rubbing his beard with his thumb and forefinger; then, making a mental inventory of my exterior, beginning with my slouch hat and taking in each article down to my tramping shoes, he said slowly,—

"And poor?"

"Yes, we all are." And I laughed; his manner made me a little uncomfortable.

My reply, however, seemed to reassure him. His features relaxed and a more kindly expression overspread his countenance.

"And now, what are *you*?" I asked, offering him a cigarette as I spoke.

"Me? Nothing," he replied curtly, refusing it with a wave of his hand. "Only Brockway,—just Brockway,—that's all,—just Brockway." He kept repeating this in an abstracted way, as if the remark was addressed to himself, the words dying in his throat.

Then he moved to the door, took down an oilskin from a peg, and saying that he would get the boat ready, went out into the night, shutting the door behind him, his bare feet flapping like wet fish as he walked.

I was not sorry I was going away so soon. The man and the place seemed uncanny.

I roused myself and crossed the room, attracted by the contents of a cupboard filled with cheap pottery and some bits of fine old English lustre. Then I examined the furniture of the curious interior,—the high-backed chairs, mahogany table,—one leg replaced with pine,—the hair sofa and tall clock in the corner by the door. They were all old and once costly, and all of a pattern of by-gone days. Everything was scrupulously clean, even to the strip of unbleached muslin hung at the small windows.

The door blew in with a whirl of wind, and Brockway entered shaking the wet from his sou'wester.

"You must wait," he said. "Dan the brakeman has taken my boat to the Railroad Dock. He will return in an hour. If you are hungry, you can sup with us. Emily, set a place for the painter."

His manner was more frank. He seemed less uncanny too. Perhaps he had been in some special ill humor when I entered. Perhaps, too, he had been suspicious of me; I had not thought of that before.

The child spread the cloth and busied herself with the dishes and plates. She was about twelve years old, slightly built and neatly dressed. Her eyes were singularly large and expressive. The light brown hair about her shoulders held a tinge of gold when the lamplight shone upon it.

Despite the evident poverty of the interior, a certain air of refinement pervaded everything. Even the old man's bare feet did not detract from it. These, by the way, he never referred to; it was evidently a habit with him. I felt this refinement not only in the relics of what seemed

to denote better days, but in the arrangement of the table, the placing of the tea tray and the providing of a separate pot for the hot water. Their voices, too, were low, characteristic of people who live alone and in peace,—especially the old man's.

Brockway resumed his seat and continued talking, asking about the city as if it were a thousand miles away instead of being almost at his door; of the artists,—their mode of life, their successes, etc. As he talked his eye brightened and his manner became more gentle. It was only his outside that seemed to belong to an old boatman, roughened by the open air, with hands hard and brown. Yet these were well shaped, with tapering fingers. One bore a gold ring curiously marked and worn to a thread.

I asked about the fishing, hoping the subject would lead him to talk of his own life, and so solve the doubt in my mind as to his class and antecedents. His replies showed his thorough knowledge of his trade. He deplored the scarcity of bass, now that the steamboats and factories fouled the river; the decrease of the oysters, of which he had several beds, all being injured by the same cause. Then he broke out against the encroachments of the real estate pirates, as he called them, staking out lots behind the Hulk and destroying his privacy.

"But you own the marsh?" I asked carelessly. I saw instantly in his face the change working in his mind. He looked at me searchingly, almost fiercely, and said, weighing each word,—

"Not one foot, young man,—do you hear?—not one foot! Own nothing but what you see. But this hulk is mine,—mine from the mud to the ridgepole, with every rotten timber in it."

The outburst was so sudden that I rose from my chair. For a moment he seemed consumed with an inward rage,—not directed to me in any way,—more as if the memory of some past wrong had angered him.

Here the child, with an anxious face, rose quickly from her seat by the window, and laid her hand on his.

The old man looked into her face for a moment, and then, as if her touch had softened him, rose courteously, took her arm, seated her at the table and then me. In a moment more he had regained his gentle manner.

The meal was a frugal one, broiled fish and potatoes, a loaf of bread, and stewed apples served in a cut glass dish with broken handles.

The meal over, the girl replaced the cotton cloth with a red one, retrimmed the lamps, and disappeared into an adjoining room, carrying the dishes. The old man lighted his pipe and seated himself in a large chair, smoking on in silence. I opened my portfolio and began retouching the sketches of the morning.

Outside the weather grew more boisterous. The wind increased; the rain thrashed against the small windows, the leakage dropping on the floor like the slow ticking of a clock.

As the evening wore on I began to be uneasy, speculating as to the possibility of my reaching home that night. To be entirely frank, I did not altogether like my surroundings or my host. One moment he was like a child; the next there came into his face an expression of uncontrollable hate that sent a shiver through me. But for the clear, steady gaze of his eye I should have doubted his sanity.

There was no sign of the return of the boat. The old man became restless himself. He said nothing, but every now and then he would peer through the window and raise his hand to his ear as if listening. It was evident that he did not want me over night if he could help it. This partly reassured me.

Finally, he laid down his pipe, put on his oilskin again, lighted a lantern, and pulled the door behind him, the wind struggling to force an entrance.

In a few minutes he returned with lantern out, the rain glistening on his white, bushy beard. Without a word, he hung up his dripping garments, placed the lantern on the floor, and called the child into the adjoining room. When he came back, he laid his hand on my shoulder and said, with a tone in his voice that was unmistakable in its sincerity:—

"I am sorry, friend, but the boat cannot get back to-night. You seem like a decent man, and I believe you are. I knew some of your kind once, and I always liked them. You must stay where you are to-night, and have Emily's room."

I thanked him, but hoped the weather would clear. As to taking Emily's room, this I could not do. I would not, of course, disturb the child. If there was no chance of my getting away, I said, I preferred taking the floor, with my trap for a pillow. But he would not hear of it. He was not accustomed, he said, to have people stay with him, especially of late years; but when they did, they could not sleep on the floor.

The child's room proved to be the old cabin of the canal-boat, with the three steps leading down from the decks. The little slanting windows were still there, and so were the bunks,—or, rather, the lower one. The upper one had been altered into a sort of closet. On one side hung a row of shelves on which were such small knickknacks as a child always loves,—a Christmas card or two, some books, a pin-cushion backed with shells, a doll's bonnet, besides some trinkets and strings of beads. Next to this ran a row of hooks covered by a curtain of cheap calico, half concealing her few simple dresses, with her muddy little shoes and frayed straw hat in the farther corner.

Above the head-board hung the likeness of a woman with large eyes, her hair pushed back from a wide, high forehead. It was framed in an old-fashioned black frame with a gold mat. Not a beautiful face, but so interesting and so expressive that I looked at it half a dozen times before I could return it to its place.

Everything was as clean and fresh as care could make it. When I dropped to sleep, the tide was swashing the floor beneath me, the rain still sousing and drenching the little windows and the roof.

The following week, one crisp, fresh morning, I was again at the Hulk. My experience the night of the storm had given me more confidence in Brockway, although the mystery of his life was still impenetrable. As I rounded the point, the old man and little Emily were just pushing off in the boat. He was on his way to his oyster beds a short distance off, his grappling-tongs and basket beside him. In his quick, almost gruff way, he welcomed me heartily and insisted on my staying to dinner. He would be back in an hour with a mess of oysters to help out. "Somebody has been

raking my beds and I must look after them," he called to me as he rowed away.

I drew my own boat well up on the gravel, out of reach of the making tide, and put my easel close to the water's edge. I wanted to paint the Hulk and the river with the bluffs beyond. Before I had blocked in my sky, I caught sight of Brockway rowing hurriedly back, followed by a shell holding half a dozen oarsmen from one of the boating clubs down the river. The crew were out for a spin in their striped shirts and caps; the coxswain was calling to him, but he made no reply.

"Say, Mr. Brockway! will you please fill our water-keg? We have come off from the boat-house without a drop," I heard one call out.

"No; not to save your lives, I wouldn't!" he shouted back, his boat striking the beach. Springing out and catching Emily by the shoulder, pushing her before him,—*"Go into the Hulk, child."* Then, lowering his voice to me, *"They are all alike, d— them, all alike. Just such a gang! I know 'em, I know 'em. Get you a drink? I'll see you dead first, d— you. See you dead first; do you hear?"*

His face was livid, his eyes blazing with anger. The crew turned and shot up the river, grumbling as they went. Brockway unloaded his boat, clutching the tongs as if they were weapons; then, tying the painter to a stake, sat down and watched me at work. Soon Emily crept back and slipped one hand around her grandfather's neck.

"Do you think you can ever do that, little Frowsy-head?" he said, pointing to my sketch. I looked up. His face was as serene and sunny as that of the child beside him.

Gradually I came to know these people better. I never could tell why, our tastes being so dissimilar. I fancied, sometimes, from a remark the old man once made, that he had perhaps known some one who had been a painter, and that I reminded him of his friend, and on that account he trusted me; for I often detected him examining my brushes, spreading the bristles on his palm, or holding them to the light with a critical air. I could see, too, that their touch was not new to him.

As for me, the picturesqueness of the Hulk, the simple mode of life of the inmates, their innate refinement, the unselfish devotion of little Emily to the old man, the conflicting elements in his character, his fierceness—almost brutality—at times, his extreme gentleness at others, his rough treatment of every stranger who attempted to land on his shore, his tenderness over the child, all combined to pique my curiosity to know something of his earlier life.

Moreover, I constantly saw new beauties in the old Hulk. It always seemed to adapt itself to the changing moods of the weather,—being grave or gay as the skies lowered or smiled. In the dull November days, when the clouds drifted in straight lines of slaty gray, it assumed a weird, forbidding look. When the wind blew a gale from the northeast, and the back water of the river overflowed the marsh,—submerging the withered grass and breaking high upon the foot-bridge,—it seemed for all the world like the original tenement of old Noah himself, derelict ever since his disembarkation, and stranded here after centuries of buffetings. On other days it had a sullen air, settling back in its bed of mud as if tired out with all these miseries, glaring at you with its one eye of a window aflame with the setting sun.

As the autumn lost itself in the winter, I continued my excursions to the Hulk, sketching in the neighborhood, gathering nuts with little Emily, or helping the old man with his nets.

On one of these days a woman, plainly but neatly dressed, met me at the edge of the wood, inquired if I had seen a child pass my way, and quickly disappeared in the bushes. I noticed her anxious face and the pathos of her eyes when I answered. Then the incident passed out of my mind. A few days later I saw her again, sitting on a pile of stones as if waiting for some one. Little Emily had seen her too, and stopped to talk to her. I could follow their movements over my easel. As soon as the child caught my eye she started up and ran towards the Hulk, the woman darting again into the bushes. When I questioned Emily about it she hesitated, and said it was a poor woman who had lost her little girl and who was very sad.

Brockway himself became more and more a mystery. I sought every opportunity to coax from him something of his earlier life, but he

never referred to it but once, and then in a way that left the subject more impenetrable than ever.

I was speaking of a recent trip abroad, when he turned abruptly and said:—

"Is the Milo still in that little room in the Louvre?"

"Yes," I answered, surprised.

"I am glad of that. Against that red curtain she is the most beautiful thing I know."

"When did you see the Venus?" I asked, as quietly as my astonishment would allow.

"Oh, some years ago, when I was abroad."

He was bending over and putting some new teeth in his oyster tongs at the time, riveting them on a flat-iron with a small hammer.

I agreed with him and asked carelessly what year that was and what he was doing in Paris, but he affected not to hear me and went on with his hammering, remarking that the oysters were running so small that some slipped through his tongs and he was getting too old to rake for them twice. It was only a glimpse of some part of his past, but it was all I could get. He never referred to it again.

December of that year was unusually severe. The snow fell early and the river was closed before Christmas. This shut off all communication with the Brockways except by the roundabout way I had first followed, over the hills from the west. So my weekly tramps ceased.

Late in the following February I heard, through Dan the brakeman, that the old man was greatly broken and had not been out of the Hulk for weeks. I started at once to see him. The ice was adrift and running with the tide, and the passage across was made doubly difficult by the floating cakes shelved one upon the other. When I reached the Hulk, the only sign of life was the thin curl of smoke from the rusty pipe. Even the snow of the night before lay unbroken on the bridge, showing that no foot had crossed it that morning. I knocked, and Emily opened the door.

"Oh, it's the painter, grandpa! We thought it might be the doctor."

He was sitting in an armchair by the fire, wrapped in a blanket. Holding out his hand, he motioned to a chair and said feebly:—

"How did you hear?"

"The brakeman told me."

"Yes, Dan knows. He comes over Sundays."

He was greatly changed,—his skin drawn and shrunken,—his grizzled beard, once so great a contrast to his ruddy skin, only added to the pallor of his face. He had had a slight "stroke," he thought. It had passed off, but left him very weak.

I sat down and, to change the current of his thoughts, told him of the river outside, and the shelving ice, of my life since I had seen him, and whatever I thought would interest him. He made no reply, except in monosyllables, his head buried in his hands. Soon the afternoon light faded, and I rose to go. Then he roused himself, threw the blanket from his shoulders and said in something of his old voice:—

"Don't leave me. Do you hear? Don't leave me!" this was with an authoritative gesture. Then, his voice faltering and with almost a tender tone, "Please help me through this. My strength is almost gone."

Later, when the night closed in, he called Emily to him, pushed her hair back and, kissing her forehead, said:—

"Now go to bed, little Frowsy-head. The painter will stay with me."

I filled his pipe, threw some dry driftwood in the stove, and drew my chair nearer. He tried to smoke for a moment, but laid his pipe down. For some minutes he kept his eyes on the crackling wood; then, reaching his hand out, laid it on my arm and said slowly:—

"If it were not for the child, I would be glad that the end was near."

"Has she no one to care for her?" I asked.

"Only her mother. When I am gone, she will come."

"Her mother? Why, Brockway! I did not know Emily's mother was alive. Why not send for her now," I said, looking into his shrunken face. "You need a woman's care at once."

His grasp tightened on my arm as he half rose from the chair, his eyes blazing as I had seen them that morning when he cursed the boat's crew.

"But not that woman! Never, while I live!" and he bent down his eyes on mine. "Look at me. Men sometimes cut you to the quick, and now and then a woman can leave a scar that never heals; but your own child,—do you hear?—your little girl, the only one you ever had, the one you laid store by and loved and dreamed dreams of,—*she can tear your heart out*. That's what Emily's mother did for me. Oh, a fine gentleman, with his yachts, and boats, and horses,—a fine young aristocrat! He was a thief, I tell you, a blackguard, a beast, to steal my girl. Damn him! Damn him! Damn him!" and he fell back in his chair exhausted.

"Where is she now?" I asked cautiously, trying to change his thoughts. I was afraid of the result if the outburst continued.

"God knows! Somewhere in the city. She comes here every now and then," in a weaker voice. "Emily meets her and they go off together when I am out raking my beds. Not long ago I met her outside on the foot-bridge; she did not look up; her hair is gray now, and her face is thin and old, and so sad,—not as it once was. God forgive me,—not as it once was!" He leaned forward, his face buried in his hands.

Then he staggered to his feet, took the lamp from the table, and brought me the picture I had seen in Emily's room the night of the storm.

"You can see what she was like. It was taken the year before his death and came with Emily's clothes. She found it in her box."

I held it to the light. The large, dreamy eyes seemed even more pleading than when I first had seen the picture; and the smooth hair pushed back from the high forehead, I now saw, marked all the more clearly the lines of anxious care which were then beginning to creep over the sweet young face. It seemed to speak to me in an earnest, pleading way, as if for help.

"She is your daughter, Brockway, don't forget that."

He made no reply. After a pause, I went on, "And a girl's heart is not her own. Was it all her fault?"

He pushed his chair back and stood erect, one hand raised above the other, clutching the blanket around his throat, the end trailing on the floor. By the flickering light of the dying fire he looked like some gaunt spectre towering above me, the blackness of the shadows only intensifying the whiteness of his face.

"Go on, go on. I know what you would say. You would have me wipe out the past and forget. Forget the home she ruined and the dead mother's heart she broke. Forget the weary months abroad, the tramping of London's streets looking into every woman's face, afraid it was she. Forget these years of exile and poverty, living here in this hulk like a dog, my very name unknown. When I am dead, they will say I have been cruel to her. God knows, perhaps I have; listen!" Then, glancing cautiously towards Emily's room and lowering his voice, he stooped down, his white sunken face close to mine, his eyes burning, gazed long and steadily into my face as if reading my very thoughts, and then, gathering himself up, said slowly: "No, no. I will not let it all be buried with me. I cannot,—cannot!" and sank into his chair.

After a while he raised his head, picked up the portrait from the table and looked into its eyes eagerly, holding it in both hands; and muttering to himself, crossed the room, and threw himself on his bed. I stirred the fire, wrapped my coat about me and fell asleep on the lounge. Later, I awoke and crept into his room. He was lying on his back, the picture still clasped in his hands.

A week later, I reached the landing opposite the Hulk. There I met Dan's wife. Dan himself had been away for several days. She told me that two nights before she had been roused by a woman who had come up on the night express and wanted to be rowed over to the Hulk at once. She was in great distress, and did not mind the danger. Dan was against taking her, the ice being heavy and the night dark; but she begged so hard he had not

the heart to refuse her. She seemed to be expected, for Emily was waiting with a lantern on the bridge and put her arms around her and led her into the Hulk.

Dan being away, I found another boatman, and we pushed out into the river. I stood up in the boat and looked over the waste of ice and snow. Under the leaden sky lay the lifeless Hulk. About the entrance and on the bridge were black dots of figures, standing out in clear relief like crows on the unbroken snow.

As I drew nearer, the dots increased in size and fell into line, the procession slowly creeping along the tottering bridge, crunching the snow under foot. Then I made out little Emily and a neatly-dressed woman heavily veiled.

When the shore was reached, I joined some fishermen who stood about on the beach, uncovering their heads as the coffin passed. An open wagon waited near the propped-up foot-bridge of the Hulk, the horse covered with a black blanket. Two men, carrying the body, crouched down and pushed the box into the wagon. The blanket was then taken from the horse and wrapped over the pine casket.

The woman drew nearer and tenderly smoothed its folds. Then she turned, lifted her veil, and in a low voice thanked the few bystanders for their kindness.

It was the same face I had seen with Emily in the woods,—the same that lay upon his heart the last night I saw him alive.

Bagging a Grandfather

“I’ll warrant that ’he, she, or it’ will come! Di usually bags her game!”

The speaker, Mr. Thomas Crosby, must have had implicit faith in his daughter’s prowess to venture such a confident assertion as that, for he was quite in the dark as to who “he, she, or it” might be.

It was a cozy November evening, when open fires and friendly drop-lights are in order, and the three grown-folks of the family were enjoying these luxuries. Mr. Crosby was supposed to be reading his paper, but he had a sociable way of letting fall an occasional item of interest, or of letting fall the paper itself, at the first hint of interest in the remarks of his wife and daughter.

Only within a very short time had there been three grown-folks in the family, unless, indeed, we count Rollo, the Gordon setter, who had attained his majority years ago. Di, who was but just turned sixteen, really did not like to remember how very recently she had been sent to bed at eight o’clock!

Could Mr. Crosby have guessed the scheme which was occupying the active brain of the young person engaged in embroidering harmless bachelor’s buttons upon a linen centrepiece, he would have been very much astonished,—whether pleasurably or otherwise, events alone must show. And since events had been taken in hand by Di the revelation was not likely to be long delayed.

The incident which had elicited her father’s declaration of confidence was a request on Di’s part to be allowed the privilege of inviting a guest of her own choosing to the Thanksgiving dinner. The family party was to be materially reduced this year, for Mrs. Crosby’s mother and sister, their only available relatives, were at that moment sojourning in Rome, where, if they were sufficiently mindful of current maxims to do as the Romans do, they were very unlikely to meet with any satisfactory combination of turkey and plum-pudding. It was with that fact in view, that

Di felt a fair degree of assurance in preferring her request. They all liked each other, of course, better than they liked anybody else, but, really, one must do something a little out of the common on Thanksgiving day.

“Certainly,” Di’s mother had agreed; “you shall invite any one you choose. I have been wishing we could think of some one to ask, but people all have their own family parties on Thanksgiving day. Is it to be one of your girl friends?”

“That is my secret,” Di had replied, sedately; “but, whoever it is, he, she, or it is a very important personage, and will have to be treated with great consideration!”

“And how is that very *unimportant* personage, Di Crosby, going to get hold of so great a dignitary?” Mrs. Crosby had laughingly inquired. At which juncture Mr. Crosby had expressed his belief that Di would bag her game.

That the prospective dinner should be incomplete was all the harder, considering the fact that the Crosbys were, by good rights, the possessors of that most desired ornament of such an occasion,—a *bona fide* grandfather. Not only was old Mr. Crosby living, and in excellent health, but his residence was not above a dozen blocks removed from his son’s house. And yet no grandfather had ever graced their Thanksgiving feast.

Family quarrels are an unpleasant subject at the best, and since Di herself had never learned the precise cause of the long estrangement between father and son, in which the old gentleman had decreed that his son’s wife and children should share, it is hardly worth while to recount it here. Suffice it to say, that it was a very old quarrel indeed, older than Di herself, and one to which Mr. and Mrs. Crosby never alluded.

It was six years ago, when Di, the eldest of the children, was ten years of age, that she had come home from school one day, breathless with excitement.

“Mamma!” she cried, bursting into the room where her mother was changing the baby’s frock: “Mamma! Have I got a grandfather?”

Mrs. Crosby glanced furtively at the round eyes of the baby, and took the precaution of smothering him in billows of white lawn before replying, rather softly: "Yes, dear; Papa's father is living. Why do you ask?"

"I saw him to-day."

"You saw him? Where?"

"On the street."

"How did you know it was he?"

"Sallie Watson asked me why I didn't bow to my grandfather."

"And what did you say?"

"I said: 'Never you mind!' And then I ran home all the way, as tight as ever I could run! Mamma, why don't we ever see him?"

The baby's head was just emerging from temporary eclipse, and Mrs. Crosby's voice dropped still lower, as she answered:

"Because, dear, *he doesn't wish it.*"

There was something so gently conclusive in this answer that little Di was silenced. Yet the look in her mother's face had not escaped her; a wistful, hurt look, such as the child had never seen there before. And in her own mind Di asked many questions.

What did it all mean? How did it happen that her grandfather did not wish it? Why was he so different from other girls' grandfathers? There must be something very wrong somewhere, but where was it? Since it could not possibly be with her father or mother, it must be that her grandfather was himself at fault.

The object of Di's perplexities, Mr. Horatio Crosby, lived all alone in a very good house, and was in the habit of driving about in a very pretty victoria; people bowed to him, people who were friends of Di's father and mother, and must therefore be creditable acquaintances. All this she soon discovered, for, having once come to know her grandfather by sight, she seemed to be constantly crossing his path.

Little by little, as she grew older, Di picked up certain stray bits of information, but she never tried to piece them together. She felt that she would a little rather not know any more. A quarrel there had certainly been, some time in the dark ages before she was born, and the old man had proved himself obstinate and implacable. Friendly overtures had been made from time to time, but he had set his face against all such advances, and now, for many, many years,—as many as three or four, little Di had gathered,—the friendly overtures had ceased.

One gets used to things, and Di got used to having a grandfather who did not know her by sight. She was sure he did not know her, because once, when she was twelve years old, he had stopped her on the street to tell her that she had dropped her pocket-handkerchief. It had been very polite of the old gentleman, and she had been glad not to lose her handkerchief. Yet, as she thanked him, she gave him one searching look, and she told herself that he had a very cross expression, as well as a very harsh voice.

This uncomplimentary verdict was largely due to the fact that, at this period, Di had quite made up her mind that her grandfather was a hateful, unreasonable old despot, and that it served him right never to come to the family parties, nor to have any Christmas presents, nor to have seen the baby, which Mamma said was the prettiest of all her babies, and which Di considered the most enchanting object on the face of the earth.

But again many years had passed,—four, in this instance,—and there came a time, only a few weeks previous to the opening of our story, when Di found herself constrained to modify her view of her grandfather.

It happened that she had gone with her drawing teacher, Miss Downs, to an exhibition of paintings. Among the pictures was a very striking one entitled *Le Grandpère*. It represented an old French peasant, just stopping off work for the day, with a flock of grandchildren clinging about his knees. Miss Downs called Di's attention to the wonderful reach of upland meadow, and the exquisite effect of the sunset light on the face of the old man; but, to Di, the meadow and the sunset light were unimportant accessories to the central idea. It was the grandfather himself that commanded all her attention,—the look of blissful indulgence on the old

man's face; his attitude of protecting affection towards one young girl in particular, on whose head the toil-stained hand rested.

"Yes," she said, after several minutes of rapt contemplation: "Yes; the sunset is very nice, and the fields; but, oh, the old man is such a darling!"

As she spoke she turned to see how her teacher took her remark, and found herself face to face, not with Miss Downs, but with her own grandfather! She gave a little gasp of surprise, which he appeared not to notice.

"So you think him a darling, do you?" he asked, and somehow his voice did not sound quite as harsh as it had done four years ago.

Miss Downs had passed on, and there was no one standing near them, no one at all in the gallery who shared Di's knowledge of the strange situation. She felt sure that the old man had no suspicion of her identity.

"Yes, I do," she answered boldly.

"What makes a darling of him?" the old gentleman inquired.

Di felt that this was her opportunity, and that she was letting it slip. But she could not help herself, and she only answered rather lamely:

"Oh, nothing, except that he is *such a good grandfather!*" Upon which she beat a hasty retreat, and fled to the protection of Miss Downs, whom she found in an adjoining room.

It was perhaps twenty minutes later that Di and her teacher passed the picture again, and, behold, there was the old gentleman standing, lost in thought, exactly on the spot where she had left him. He did not seem to be looking at the picture, but Di felt certain that he was thinking of it. And, suddenly, it passed through her mind like a flash that he was sorry.

"Yes; he's sorry," she said to herself. "He's sorry, and he doesn't know how to say so!"

The more she thought of it in the days that followed,—and she seemed to be thinking pretty much all the time of the old man and the look

on his face as he stood before the picture,—the more convinced she became that he was sorry and did not know how to say so.

“And he ought not to have to say so,” she told herself. “He’s an old, old man, and he ought not to have to say that he is sorry.”

The old, old man—aged sixty-five—might have taken exception to that part of her proposition touching his extreme antiquity, but we may be pretty sure that he would have cordially endorsed her opinion that the dignity of his years forbade his saying that he was sorry.

In those days Di used to walk often past her grandfather’s house. It was a very big house for a single occupant. Even the stout footman, whom she had once seen at the door, did not seem stout enough, nor numerous enough to relieve the big house of its vacancy. There were heavy woollen draperies in the parlor windows, but not a hint of the pretty white muslin which a woman would have had up in no time. Once she passed the house just at dusk, after the lights were lighted. Through the long windows she looked into the empty room. Not so much as a cat or a dog was awaiting the master. In the swift glance with which she swept the interior she noted that the fireplace was boarded in. That seemed to Di indescribably dreary. Perhaps her grandfather did not sit here; perhaps he had a library somewhere, like their own. But, no; there was the portly footman entering with the evening paper, which he laid upon the table before coming to close the shutters.

“He’s too old to say he is sorry,” Di said to herself, as she turned dejectedly away; “a great deal too old—and lonely—and dreary!”

And it was on that very evening that she made her little petition to her mother, and that her father declared that Di was sure to bag her game.

Old Mr. Crosby, meanwhile, was too well-used to his empty house and to his boarded-in fireplace to mind them very much, too unaccustomed to muslin curtains to miss them. Yet he had not been on very good terms with himself for the past few weeks, and that was something which he did mind particularly.

The result of his long cogitation in front of the grandfather picture had been highly uncomplimentary to the artist. He pronounced the

homespun subject unworthy of artistic treatment, and he told himself that it merited just that order of criticism which it had received at the hands of the young person with the rather pretty turn of countenance, who had regarded it with such enthusiasm. Nevertheless, he did not forget the picture,—nor yet the young person!

It was the afternoon of Thanksgiving day, and there was a light fall of snow outside. He remembered that in old times there used always to be a lot of snow on Thanksgiving day. Things were very different in old times. He wondered what would have been thought of a man fifty years ago,—or seventeen years ago, for the matter of that,—who was giving his servants a holiday and dining at the club. As if those foreign servants had any concern in the Yankee festival! But then, what concern had he, Horatio Crosby, in it nowadays? What had he to be thankful for? Whom had he to be thankful with? He was very lucky to have a club to go to! He might as well go now, though it was still two or three hours to dinner time. He would ring for his overcoat and snow-shoes.

His hand was on the bell-rope—for Mr. Horatio Crosby was old-fashioned, and had never yet admitted an electric button to his domain.

At that moment the door opened softly—what was Burns thinking of, not to knock?—and there stood, not Burns, not Nora, but a slender apparition in petticoats, with a dash of snow on hat and jacket, and a dash of daring in a pair of very bright eyes.

“Good afternoon, Grandfather,” was the apparition’s cheerful greeting, and involuntarily the old gentleman found himself replying with a “Good afternoon” of his own.

The apparition moved swiftly forward, and, before he knew what he was about, an unmistakable kiss had got itself applied to his countenance and—more amazing still—he was strongly of the impression that there had been—no robbery!

Greatly agitated by so unusual an experience, he only managed to say: “So you are—?”

“Yes; I am Di Crosby,—your granddaughter, you know, and—this is Thanksgiving day!”

“You don’t say so!” and the old man gazed down at her in growing trepidation.

“Let’s sit down,” Di suggested, feeling that she gained every point that her adversary lost. “This must be your chair. And I’ll sit here. There! Isn’t this cozy?”

“Oh, very!”

The master of the house had sufficiently recovered himself to put on his spectacles, the use of which was affording him much satisfaction. He really did not know that the young girl of the day was so pretty!

“I don’t suppose you smoke a pipe,” Di remarked, in a strictly conversational tone.

“Well, no; I can’t say I do. Why?”

“I only thought I should like to light one for you. You know,” she added, confidentially, “girls always light their grandfathers’ pipes in books. And I’ve had so little practice in that sort of thing!”

“In pipes?”

“No—in grandfathers!”

There came a pause, occupied, on Di’s part, by a swift, not altogether approving survey of the stiff, high-studded room. This time it was the old gentleman who broke the silence.

“I believe you are the young lady who admired that old clodhopper in the picture,” he remarked.

“Oh, yes; he was a great darling!”

“He wasn’t very handsome.”

“No, but—there is always something so dear about a grandfather!”

“Always?”

“Yes; always!” and suddenly Di left her seat, and, taking a few steps forward, she dropped on her knees before him.

“Grandfather,” she said, clasping her small gloved hands on his knee, “Grandfather!”

She was meaning to be very eloquent indeed,—that is, if it were to become necessary. She did not dream that that one word, so persuasively spoken, was more eloquent than a whole oration.

“Well, Miss Di?”

“Grandfather, I’ve a great favour to ask of you, and I should like to have you say ‘yes’ beforehand!”

He looked down upon her with a heart rendered surprisingly soft by that first word,—and a mind much tickled by the audacity of the rest of it.

“And are you in the habit of getting favours granted in the dark?” he inquired.

“Papa says I usually bag my game!”

Now old Mr. Crosby had been a sportsman in his day, and he was mightily pleased with the little jest. But he only asked:

“And what’s your game in this instance, if you please?”

“You!”

“Oh, I! And you want to bag me? Bag me for what?”

“For dinner!”

“Oh, for dinner!”

“Yes! We are all by ourselves to-day, and you’ll just make the table even. There’s only Papa and Mamma, and Louise, and Beth, and Alice, and the baby.” Somehow the succession of sweet, soft names sounded very attractive to the crabbed old man.

“The baby is six years old,” Di continued, unconsciously adding another touch to the attractiveness of the picture.

“And what is her name?”

“*His name is Horatio. I never liked it very well; it seemed too long for a baby. But, do you know?—I think I shall like it better now.*”

She was still kneeling before him, with her small gloved hands clasped on his knee. It was clear that she had not the faintest idea of being refused. Yet even had she been somewhat less confident, she might well have taken heart of hope, for, at this point, he gently laid his wrinkled hand upon hers.

“You *will* come to dinner?” she begged, apparently quite unconscious of the little caress. “We dine at five on Thanksgiving day, and you and I can walk over together. They will all be so surprised,—and so happy!”

“Then they are not expecting me?” and the old man gave her a very piercing look, which did not seem to pierce at all.

“No; they didn’t know who it was to be. I only said it was a very important personage.”

“Coming in a bag!” he suggested.

“Oh, that’s only a sportsman’s expression!”

“Indeed! And is it customary nowadays to go a-hunting for your Thanksgiving dinner?”

Di’s eyes danced. This was indeed a grandfather worth waiting for! But she only answered demurely:

“That depends upon your quarry!”

Lucky Di, to have hit upon that pretty, old-fashioned word! She had, indeed, read her Sir Walter to good purpose.

Now, Mr. Horatio Crosby had held out stoutly against every appeal of natural affection, of reason, of conscience. He was not a quick-tempered man like his son; he was not, like his daughter-in-law, easily rebuffed; but there was about him a toughness of fibre which yielded neither to blows nor to pressure, and which, for many years, neither friend nor foe had penetrated. And here was this young thing simply ignoring the hitherto impenetrable barrier! The clear young eyes looked straight through it, the

fresh young voice made nothing of it, the playful fancies overleapt it. A quarry, indeed! Where had the child got hold of the word?

Of a sudden the old man bent forward and lightly touched the laughing face in token of surrender.

“It’s an old bird you’ve winged, little girl,” he said, as he rose to his feet and stepped once more to the bell-rope; and this time he really rang for his coat and overshoes.

“And so you’ve named this little chap Horatio?”

Dinner was over,—a very pleasant, natural kind of dinner, too, in spite of the difficulty some of the family had found in eating it,—and they were all gathered about a roaring woodfire, fortifying themselves, with the aid of coffee, cigars, and chocolate-drops,—each according to his kind,—for a game of blind-man’s-buff. The small scion of the house was seated on his grandfather’s knee, playing with his grandfather’s fob, after the immemorial habit of small scions.

“Of course we named him Horatio!” It was Mrs. Crosby who answered, and, as her father-in-law looked across at her face with the firelight playing upon it, he seemed to remember that he had always wished for a daughter.

“And what do you call him for short?”

“Just Horatio!” piped up little Alice, who was sitting on the rug at the old gentleman’s feet, gently pulling Rollo’s long-suffering ears.

“Yes,” said Mr. Thomas Crosby; “we have always been proud of the name.”

Then Di, perceiving a slight unsteadiness in the voice in which this was said, stepped behind her grandfather’s chair, and, dropping a small kiss on the top of his head, looked across at her father, and exclaimed:

“Oh, Papa! To think of our having bagged a grandfather!”

The Burning of the Vanities

“Behold, the sky shall be darkened! Behold, it shall rain fire and flame, stones and rocks; it shall be wild weather. I have placed ye between four winds,” saith the Lord—namely, prelates, princes, priests and bad citizens.

“Fly from their vices; gather ye together in charity. Fly from Rome, O Florence, and come to repentance! The Lord saith: ‘I will debase the princes of Italy and trample on the pride of Rome; then, O Italy, trouble after trouble shall befall thee, trouble from this side and from that—rumours from the east, rumours from the west, from all sides rumour after rumour.’

“Then men shall yearn for the visions of the prophets, and shall have them not, for the Lord saith, ‘Now do I prophesy in my turn.’”

So ended the sermon of Frà Girolamo, preached from a temporary pulpit erected in front of the church of Santa Maria del Fiore, the last day of the Carnival of the year fourteen hundred and ninety-seven, the third year since the expulsion of the Medici, the third year of the Friar’s rule in Florence.

The monks of St. Mark’s were gathered about the pulpit, and round them the Piangoni, the active supporters of the Friar; beyond them the crowd filled the Piazza from end to end, a crowd reverent, silent, excited.

It was a windless spring; the odours of the flowers in the fields without hung in the breezeless air and filled the city streets with perfume. Above the fine straight lines of the houses and the majestic shape of the church the sky hung pure of cloud and deeply blue as an early violet.

Frà Girolamo paused, gripping the smooth edge of the pulpit, and looked across the gathered multitude.

He wore the habit of the Friars of St. Mark, a loose coarse brown robe and a hood and shoulder-piece in one that fitted closely round his face and neck. He was of the middle height, stooping a little and gaunt; his features were harsh and rudely modelled, his complexion dark and sickly,

cheeks and forehead fined with deep furrows, his nose a heavy aquiline, his eyes large, expressive and of a sparkling grey tint; his thick but mobile lips were at that moment compressed in a firmness that had the sweetness of true strength. Truly that expression of noble gentleness illumined the whole ungainly countenance, softened the unlovely lines and gave divine dignity to the common features.

As he stood so, motionless, the monks began to sing psalms and the crowd went to their knees on the paving stones of the great Piazza, their coloured garments shifting and changing in light and shade as they moved. When the men's voices sank on the last pulse of the holy music that rose like incense on the clear thin air, Frà Girolamo took the Host, and raising it with his right hand lifted the left in blessing of the kneeling press of worshippers.

The great and stately door of the church was a fitting background for the frail figure holding the Host of God which gleamed in the lucid rays of the sun that struck straight from heaven on it, like a mystical jewel fed with inner light.

Frà Girolamo flashed his eyes over the crowd, among whom he could distinguish several of the Compagnacci, adherents of the vanished Medici, and many of the Arrabbiati, his bitter foes who had threatened to revive the old orgies of the Medicean rule, the pagan and splendid carnival of Lorenzo, called the Magnificent, now for years since dead in sin.

A strong excitement shook the slender frame of the Friar; his countenance became blanched with the intense emotion that inspired him. In a trembling but powerful voice he cried—

“O Lord, if my deeds be not sincere, if my words be not inspired by Thee, strike me dead on the instant.”

The Host was lowered and the people rose from their knees; but the Friar remained in the wooden pulpit.

Now the crowd drew back and made way for a strange procession that was wending across the Piazza.

It was headed by four fair-headed youths attired in white, who bore between them a marble figure of the Infant Christ, pointing with one hand to a wreath of thorns and raising the other in benediction; this was the work of Donato di Bardi, a famous sculptor. After came a company also in white and carrying in their hands red crosses, singing the lauds and hymns of Girolamo Benivieni in sweet and eager voices.

Behind them followed men and women soberly dressed who collected from the crowd, holding out on silver trays the alms they received; they were begging on behalf of the Monte di Pietà, and had already amassed more gold than had been given in charity in Florence during a year of the old Medicean order.

Next there came a vast number of children decently and quietly dressed, some singing, some repeating prayers, all carrying, dragging or supporting between them a strange and varied number of objects—books, dresses, pictures, statues, masks, false hair, boxes and cases of perfume, lutes, viols, mirrors, ornaments, gauds, manuscripts, cards, dice, cosmetics, chess-boards, cups and balls of gold, and all manner of rich, precious trifles and beautiful gorgeous examples of art.

These were the vanities that had been collected during the Carnival by the very children who, under the rule of Lorenzo, had sung and danced, fought and played profane games in the streets they now traversed in orderly procession; then with the Carnival verses of the Medici on their lips, now with holy hymns.

From every house in Florence they had demanded all vanities to be given to them, and when they received the offerings they sang a devotional work composed by Frà Girolamo. Now laden with these relics of the old pagan rule, they were making their way to the Piazza dei Signori, there to complete the purging of Florence by publicly burning the vanities that had been so long her temptation and her curse.

The Friar descended from the pulpit and joined the procession in company with his personal supporters; chanting and rejoicing, the children made their joyful way, dragging with them the trophies of luxury and wantonness, whose perfume of musk, ambergris and nard gave a heaviness to the air as they passed.

Frà Girolamo held himself, as was his habit, modestly, and kept his eye low in real humility; but in his great heart was a wild exultation that this city of his love had responded to the agonies of his exhortation and was turning from the wickedness of Borgia and Medici to the strong face of God.

Beneath his rough and long robe beat a spirit so lofty and enthusiastic that had it not been hampered and held down to earth by the poor enfeebled body it had walked on the heads of all of them and conversed with Angels.

But since He who made the soul of this Friar directed these things for His own ends, Frà Girolamo, who bore in his bosom a burning light of truth that might have served to redeem the world, worked in the wicked, lovely city of Florence and spent his strength to redeem this little circle of beloved sinners.

When the procession reached the Piazza there was found to be a great eight-sided pyramid there, built up in the centre of the square and reaching near as high as the Palace of the Signori; there were seven stages to this, one for each of the deadly sins. On the apex stood two grotesque and glittering figures, robed in gemmed satin and wearing high-coloured crowns; one was King Carnival, the old monarch of the wanton Medicean orgies; and in his monstrous, under-jawed face and princely garb, in his straight heavy locks and the velvet cap under the circlet of sovereignty, might be traced a malicious likeness to the magnificent Lorenzo, purposely contrived by the artificer as an affront to the banished House.

The other figure was Lucifer, horned, black, and hideous, bearing in the lap of his scarlet robes seven little images representing the seven mortal sins.

The procession paused; the men and women arranging themselves under the Loggia de' Lanzi and along the Pinghiera, while the children advanced two at a time, and deposited their loads on the various platforms, where the soldiers of the Signori arranged them in piles from the bottom to the base of the pyramid.

So much had been collected, so many and various were the costly offerings, that several hours passed before the final vanity was cast on to the heap and the children retired to a great circle round the Piazza; but all this while there had been no sign of weariness or impatience on the part of the people, who continued with great spirit and gladness to sing their lauds and hymns, mingled with denunciations of the Carnival.

Frà Girolamo stood back from the pile with his hands folded in the sleeves of his robe; his face was largely concealed by the shadow of his hood, which he had partially drawn forward, and he conveyed neither by word nor gesture fanatic rejoicing or common triumph. Rather was his mien sad and grave, as if he weighed what was being done and pondered on that far greater cleansing of Florence of which this was but a symbol—the cleansing of the hearts of her citizens.

Truly when the last child cast down his burden and withdrew, it was a marvellous sight of worldly splendour to behold; all these gauds and glories cast together in this heap under the calm spring sky, half in the shadow of the palace and other noble buildings and half sparkling and glittering in the clear gold of the early sunshine, fainting in the approach of afternoon. Rich and valuable were these vanities, worth many thousands of ducats; a merchant of Venice had offered to buy them for the vast sum of twenty thousand crowns, and the portrait of this man was flung on top of the other baubles.

Carnival costumes were there of satin, silk and tinsel; chaplets and garlands of false flowers; locks and wigs of artificial hair, masks painted and gilt; necklets, bracelets and brocade shoes, girdles, ribbons and playing cards; chess-men in ivory, silver and ebony; fans in feathers dyed bright colours; books of profane poems with pictures tinted and gilt; lutes, viols and pipes painted and carved; boxes, bottles and caskets of cosmetics, powders, philtres and charms; statues and busts of pagan gods and goddesses, white marble, veined marble, and time-stained alabaster; mirrors set in copper, gold and silver; toy daggers for ladies with handles of jade, sardonyx and emerald; watches of crystal, of filigree, of enamel; caskets of perfumes; paintings of wanton figures, of beautiful women, of heathen scenes; velvet purses embroidered with armorial bearings; gauntlets stitched thickly with silver thread and pearl; mantles edged with vair and

sable; sword-hilts fringed with knotted silk and gold; pins for the hair set with rubies and sapphires; false faces and gaudy finery for the carnival; statues in bronze, in gilt, in silver; enamel cups and drinking-horns bound with a rim of precious stones; cushions of brocade and down; boxes of ointment, of unguents; phials of rare perfumes; caskets of sweetmeats, bags of confetti, dice, parti-coloured playing balls, and many trifling things composed the pile. And with the glimmer of the gems, the shining of the gold and silver, the soft gleam of the rich stuffs, the flash of glass and crystal, the strange fantastic look of mask and carnival garment, it seemed as if the ransom of some monarch of the east, a pasha of Turkey or some potentate of Rhodes or Candy Isle was gathered there.

Now an excited and trembling silence of expectancy fell upon the crowd; four of the soldiers of the Signori stepped forward with flaming torches that showed pale and smoky in the daylight, and as Frà Girolamo raised his hand they lit the four corners of the pile, the interior of which was filled with combustibles.

As the flames hesitated, crouched, then seized hold and caught their prey, the trumpeters of Florence blew a blast of triumph, the bells broke out from the palace and the people gave free vent to their wild enthusiasm.

The Friar did not move nor even lift his eyes to the opulent sacrifice; the thick soft smoke spread sideways in a sudden little gust of wind and half obscured his figure.

The people burst out of their ordered ranks; they laughed, shouted, sang their spiritual lauds and crowded about the huge costly bonfire in a press of delirious pleasure; the Piangoni stood near and by the aid of long poles thrust the vanities deeper into the flames and cast back any that had slipped, chanting the while the hymns of Girolamo Benivieni.

The Friar maintained his position; his lips moved as if he ardently communed with himself; so absorbed was he in his own meditations that he did not notice a man standing close, and also motionless amid the circling and excited throng, who was observing him with intense and peculiar attention.

This man, although he wore the sober mantle of an ordinary citizen, and though he appeared to be there in sympathy with the general religious enthusiasm, was nevertheless in air and appearance one of the Arrabbiati or Compagnacci, who intrigued with the outcast Medici and hated the Friar, though they submitted to a force they could not withstand with safety as yet.

He was wrapped so completely in his dark cloak, the hood of which was well drawn over his face, that had any been free enough to observe him they would have had difficulty in judging of his person and character; the thick folds of the common stuff, however, could not disguise the virile grace of his figure, the beautiful poise of his head and the delicate shape of his feet and of the hand that clasped his hood at the chin.

The excited people and friars, breaking into a kind of religious dance, ran round and about this man, and in between him and Frà Girolamo; but he did not move nor once take his eyes from the equally still figure of the Friar, save to occasionally lift them to the pyre of the Vanities, now a burning cone of flames from base to apex, from which rose thick columns of sweet, heavy-scented smoke.

The slow Italian dusk was closing in; the sky deepened above the palace and the towers, the roofs and domes of Florence. The smoke, spreading, filled the Piazza and gave a cloudy unreality to the moving crowd who circled the strengthening light of the fire.

On the upper part of the buildings a pale sun-glow lingered; but the Lion on the Palace steps was absorbed in shade save for the flickering unearthly glow that the burning vanities emitted and that now and then touched the surroundings with a murky crimson reflection.

All the while the bells of the Signori were pealing, and the music of them rose and fell with the hymns. Frà Girolamo suddenly looked up at the flames, the cracking canvas, shrivelling silks, splitting marbles, melting gold and silver, flaring scrolls of manuscript and smoking boxes of perfumes that composed the pyre; then, with bowed head, made his way quickly and unobserved through the crowd and out of the Piazza. He was instantly and closely followed by the tall stranger who had so persistently

regarded him, and who now came softly after without attracting his attention.

The streets were deserted; every one being gathered in or near the Piazza, and the Friar passed unnoticed before the fronts of the tall, carved houses; he was swiftly making his way to the Convent of St. Mark, and had turned down an empty side street, deep in shade, when he suddenly paused, as if inwardly troubled, and, turning slowly, beheld the stranger who had also come to a stop a few paces behind him.

Frà Girolamo regarded him earnestly; they were alone in the street at the bottom of which was a glimpse of the Arno's arched bridge; behind them rose the steps and closed door of a hospital, above the garden wall of which showed cypress trees and branches of laurel.

"You," said the tall man in sweet and cultivated Tuscan, "you are Frà Girolamo Savonarola, friar of St. Mark's and ruler of Florence?"

"Girolamo Savonarola I am," answered the Friar; "ruler of Florence I am not, but God's instrument for some good in this city."

The other, still speaking from the depths of the coarse hood that completely concealed his face, made reply—

"Ruler and Master of Florence, Friar, even as Lorenzo was Ruler and Master, even as the Medici were great are you great, and to-day you have had proof of it."

"Who are you?" demanded Frà Girolamo.

"One who loved Lorenzo and found Florence pleasant in his days."

"I did not hate Lorenzo—I would have saved his soul."

"You refused him absolution!"

"Because," replied the Friar, "he would not repent of his sins."

The stranger laughed impatiently.

"Usurper! You hold his place, while his son, at the Borgia's footstool, eats in Rome the husks of charity."

Frà Girolamo answered sternly, while the light of enthusiasm kindled to red fire in his eyes.

“Who are you who speak for the wicked? Piero de’ Medici abused his power; he would have sold our liberty to the French—lustful, vain, hollow; he was banished Florence for his sins and a price put upon his head. Woe to this city if he returns! At the Borgia’s footstool, you say! It is fitting that such a prince should fly to such a Pope!”

The stranger came a short step nearer and loosened his hand on his hood so that his face was visible to the Friar, who observed that he wore one of the hideous masks of the Medicean Carnival, mottled and spotted to represent a plague-stricken countenance; he noticed the Friar’s start of aversion and laughed again.

“This should have gone to feed yonder pyre!” he said. “Oh, credulous Friar, do you think that you have burnt all the sins in Florence?”

Girolamo Savonarola answered simply.

“I have done what God put it into my heart to do. Let Him judge me. For you, ask me what question you would have answered, or if this is but idleness, let me on my way.”

“This is your day of triumph,” said the other man with a passionate ring in his voice. “You to-day have burnt all the Medici rejoiced in—painting, statuary, music, books, poetry, gay dresses, perfumes, cards and dice; and those people who praised Lorenzo for making this Florence so beautiful and splendid have danced round your pyre in gladness!”

Frà Girolamo regarded him steadily.

“Are not you also,” he asked gently, “pleased to see this city brought a little way to repentance?”

“Friar,” answered the stranger vehemently, “I am your enemy. I stand for all you would destroy—the lust of the world, the pride of the beautiful, the power of the devil. I am also a ruined, outcast, beggared man, one of those your rule has banished from Florence. If I were discovered I should be murdered, and that would be better than to starve in Rome.”

“Your name?” interrupted Frà Girolamo. “Are you one whom I know?”

“You know me,” was the haughty response; “but my name is not pleasing to your ears. *You* I hate, ay, and all your works; but there is a day soon when all hates shall be satisfied.”

Girolamo Savonarola made quiet answer.

“If you are a follower of Piero de’ Medici, I warn you to quit Florence, for I cannot and would not save one of the tyrant’s tools from the just anger of the People—the People!—in *them* is my trust against these evils you threaten me with.”

He turned to pass on his way, but the young man sprang lightly after him and caught his mantle.

“The People!” he laughed. “Did not the People shout for Lorenzo yesterday? Will they not shout for Piero to-morrow!”

Frà Girolamo looked at him with serene eyes.

“Never for the Medici,” he answered. “Never for the tyrant. Florence is free.”

“You are a bold man to say so,” returned the stranger, standing at his ease, with one foot on the lowest hospital step. “Free! No, Florence is no freer than she was five years ago; only now it is you who rule instead of the Magnificent. But not for long, Friar.”

“Again, who are you who stay me in the street with these prophecies?”

The sun had left even the tops of the buildings now, and the lucid light was fading from the heavens where an early star hung chill and pale above the Duomo; the black foliage of the cypress and the sharp, long leaves of the laurel showed clearly over the wall and against the argent flush of twilight; a little fear crept into the Friar’s heart, not base fear, or cowardice, or any trembling for himself, but the shadow of some coming doubt lest after all he had not saved Florence; in the tall, dark-robed figure of the stranger, now standing with his arms folded on his breast and

regarding him with eyes that shot evil glimmers from the holes in the mottled green and yellow mask, in this man with his settled enmity, his mocking composure, he saw testified all the hatred, scorn and malice that had opposed his life-work.

“Begone!” he said sternly, “and disturb me not.”

The stranger gave him a disdainful salutation and flung up his graceful head.

“Back to your cell, and pray the people in whom you trust keep faithful!” he cried lightly.

“Two thousand crowns to-day for the head of Piero de’ Medici—how much in a year’s time for thine, O Friar, when Alessandro Borgia cries you excommunicate?”

Frà Girolamo stepped away and his dark eyes lifted to the evening sky.

“The Pope is a broken tool, a vile trader in holy things,” he answered with great dignity. “And in Florence, where I am beloved, his authority is worth nothing; here the voice of God alone is strong.”

“And the voice of the People,” returned the stranger mockingly; and with a low, insulting laugh he moved slowly away and was soon lost in the shadows.

Girolamo Savonarola gazed after him a moment, then proceeded on his way, a strange excitement throbbing in his veins and before his eyes a mistiness of familiar objects, as if an unnatural darkness had fallen.

He walked for a while in this manner, meeting no one, marvelling at the curious emptiness of the city and the increasing blackness; everything seemed strange and unusual. He thought he should have reached his Convent by now, but instead found himself traversing dark, empty streets that were those of Florence yet unknown to him. He turned to retrace his steps, but was like one groping in the labyrinth, roads and houses crossed and recrossed, and he wandered confused. Nowhere was there any light, in either window or in the heaven; he had lost sight of the Duomo and the star

above it; as if the Plague had crept through the city was the silence and the loneliness.

Then out of the empty hush came the sound as of harsh wings beating together, and a voice cried strongly—

“Girolamo Savonarola!”

The Friar cast up his eyes to the blinding mist and answered—

“I am here!”

And the voice made reply—

“Come thou and see how the people of Florence love thee!”

With great rejoicing he said, “I come!”

Forward he pressed through the obscurity, and the darkness began to be tinged with red and dispelled as from the spreading glow of flames, and as Frà Girolamo hastened on he found himself suddenly on the Piazza again, standing apart from a vast crowd that was dancing and singing about a huge fire that lit the whole black sky and stained the blank buildings with a lurid colour.

And the voice said, very low and in the Friar’s ear—

“These are the people who sang the songs of Lorenzo de’ Medici, the people who burnt the vanities. Behold what task they perform now!”

Frà Girolamo looked and saw that the crowd was very brilliantly dressed, that the women wore jewels and paints, the men fine silks and rich weapons, and that they danced in a mad profane style; many were masked and all wreathed with flowers, and the heavy scents they were anointed with hung in the thick air; nor did they sing hymns, but the wanton carnival songs of Lorenzo de’ Medici.

And in the midst of their reckless rejoicing flared and blazed the vivid devouring flames, soaring one above the other until they far overtopped the dark palace; the deep crimson glow of them picked out from the darkness the painted, leering faces, the evil masks, the leaping, dancing, abandoned forms.

“This is not Florence,” murmured the Friar.

“This is Florence,” came the answer. “And these are the people—thy people—”

Frà Girolamo felt a hand on his shoulder, and withdrawing his horrified eyes from the devilish crowd, saw at his side the tall figure of the stranger who had accosted him before the hospital.

“Look closer,” he urged. “Look closer. What vain things do they burn now? Not cards, lutes and paintings. Look closer.”

The Friar again gazed at the Piazza, and this time discerned above the flames the outline of a huge gallows from which depended several bodies, hung by the necks, and the blood of these men rained down on to the fire, for the crowd with jeering and laughter threw stones at them that broke their flesh.

“They wear monks’ habits,” said Frà Girolamo, and he strained forward.

At this moment the fire consumed the rope holding one of the victims, and as the crowd gave a shout of rejoicing he fell into the white heat of the fire. In that second the Friar had caught sight of the face; it was the dead tortured countenance of his beloved disciple, Frà Domenico. He gave a cry of anguish, and would have thrown himself into the crowd, but the tall stranger held him back.

And now his maddened eyes noticed a man in scarlet and purple, mounted on a white mule, who rode round the edge of the pyre and urged on the crowd with ribald triumph. This man was old, and wore a triple crown; and at his bridle were two younger men, like him in the face—horribly beautiful, wearing extravagant garments.

“Alessandro Borgia,” said the stranger in the Friar’s ear, “and his two sons, Francesco and Cesare.”

Frà Girolamo tried to speak, but his tongue refused to move.

“Look again,” urged the voice, low, insistent and mocking.

The Friar gazed up through the smoke and flame, and in the horrid blaze saw another figure dangle at the rope's end, then drop; again, in the instant's downward fall he saw the face—livid and despairing.

This time his own. His—face and figure.

“See how the people of Florence burn Girolamo Savonarola!” cried the stranger. “These people who wept to hear you preach in the Duomo!”

Frà Girolamo fell back a step and raised a shuddering hand to shut out the awful fire.

The other flung back his mantle, and the great glow of the fire caught the embroideries on the gay dress hitherto concealed beneath.

“You dethroned the Medici,” he said; “these,”—he pointed to the crowd—“will dethrone you.”

Soft blackness rose up, choking the bright flames, blotting out the shouting people, the dim outline of the buildings swirling round the feet of Frà Girolamo and mounting to his eyes. He cast himself on his knees and seemed to sink forward on nothingness; his senses broke and forsook him; he flung out his hands and made an effort to hurl off the darkness as if it were a mantle tossed over his head; he felt his knees strike stone, the blackness rent, tore, lifted and disappeared; he found himself lying up the hospital steps; before him the low wall, the cypress tree, the laurel branches; beyond, the darkening pure sky. And beside him the tall stranger staring at him through the holes of his hideous mask.

The Friar staggered to his feet.

“I have had a vision,” he said under his breath. “Methought you were my guide. Who are you?”

The other tore off the mask, snapping the orange ribbons that bound it to his head, and disclosing a superb face framed in clusters of brown curls, flushed with crimson.

“I am Piero!” he cried. “I am the Medici! And after the burning of Girolamo Savonarola I shall rule again in Florence!”

“Then it was no vision,” answered Frà Girolamo, “but a Devil’s fantasy—”

“A fantasy,” said Piero; “but you shall test its truth.”

The Friar leant against the wall of the hospital and closed his eyes to shut out the picture of the wicked face and red eyes he had last seen with that same smiling expression casting hate on him from beside the death-bed of Lorenzo the Magnificent.

“Lord! Lord!” he cried strongly. “Save me from the snares and delusions of evil!”

Now he opened his eyes and saw about him his own cell in St. Mark, and he lay on his bed, and beside him sat his beloved disciple, Frà Domenico, and he shuddered as one waking from a terrible dream.

“How got I here from the Piazza?” he asked, sitting up. And they told him that a faintness had come over him as would often happen in the pulpit, and that so insensible he had been brought to the Convent.

“Truly,” said Frà Domenico, with love beaming in his eyes, “this was the day of your glory—for all the vanities in Florence were burnt to ashes—yes, even to nothingness was all that wantonness reduced.”

Girolamo Savonarola looked at Frà Domenico, then at his own body.

“To ashes, to nothingness!” he murmured. “Oh, God, make the spirit strong!”

The disciple asked tenderly—

“Father, what troubled you?”

Frà Girolamo made the sign of the cross and replied with a sweet composure—

“Nought—but in the crowd methought that I did see—Piero de’ Medici.”

Philip's Safety Razor

Up to the time of Philip's obsession there cannot have been in all the world a happier couple than he and his wife. As everybody knows, the ecstasy of life has its home in the imagination, and Philip and Phœbe Partington lived almost exclusively in those realms which were illumined by the light that never was on sea or land. I do not absolutely affirm that sea and land would have been the better for that light; all that I insist on was that the Partington effulgence certainly never was there. It was a remunerative light also, and out of the proceeds they bought a quantity of false Elizabethan furniture and a motor-car. A spin in the motor-car after the ecstatic labour of the morning cleared Phœbe's head, and they dined together in an Elizabethan room with rushes on the floor. That cleared Phœbe's head, too, for nothing in the world could be remoter from the setting of her imaginative life than anything Elizabethan. She and her husband lived in an opulent and lurid present, which, in its turn, was just as remote from contemporary life as most people know it, as were the "spacious days" that had left their spurious traces on the dining-room.

They were the most industrious of artists and often had as many as three *feuilletons* running simultaneously in provincial papers, and the manner of their activity was this. Every morning, directly after breakfast, Philip sat in the dining-room, and until one o'clock proceeded to turn into narrative the very complete and articulated skeleton of the tale which Phœbe manufactured in the drawing-room. The imaginative gift was hers; there was not a situation in the world which she could not contemplate unwinking, like an eagle staring into the sun, and these she passed on to her husband, whose power of putting them into narrative was as unrivalled as his wife's in conceiving them.

Picture him, then, with his plump, amiable face bent over Phœbe's imaginings, a perennial pipe in his mouth, and, invariably, two or three little tufts of cotton-wool stuck on to his cheek or chin, where he had cut himself shaving that morning. Occasionally, but very rarely, he had to go into the drawing-room to ask the elucidation of some situation: how, for instance, was Algernon Montmorency to leap lightly out of the window, and

so regain his motor-car, when Phœbe had laid the scene in the top room of the moated tower of Eagles Castle? But Phœbe could always suggest a remedy which cost the minimum of readjustment, and ten minutes afterwards Algernon would be thundering along the road with the lurid Semitic moneylender in close pursuit. But for such occasional interruption and the periodical lighting of his pipe he would not pause for a second till the morning's work was over. He never hesitated for a word, for he had at his command the entire vocabulary of English *clichés*, and he often got through two instalments before lunch. At one precisely the parlourmaid came in, and groping through the fog of tobacco-smoke, opened all the windows and began to lay the table. Upon which Philip washed off his tufts of cotton-wool, snatched Phœbe from her imaginative visions, and strolled in the garden with her till the gong summoned them to the recuperative spell of a mutton chop and a glass of blood-making Australian Burgundy.

After lunch they drove in the motor-car, returning for tea, and from tea till dinner they read over aloud and discussed their morning's work. In this way Philip made acquaintance with the subject-matter he would be employed on next morning, and Phœbe learned how that which she had written yesterday had turned out. Philip had never any criticism to make: his wife's imagination seemed to him one of the most glorious instruments ever devised for the delectation of the literary, and she often said that of all contemporary novelists her husband was the only man capable of handling the situations she poured out in this unending flood. After dinner they played patience, went early to bed, and awoke with an unquenchable zest for the labour and rewards of another day.

It is impossible to figure a happier or a more harmonious existence. In imagination they roamed over the entire world without the expense or inconvenience of foreign travel: their spirits ranged through the whole gamut of human emotion, and whatever adversities the Algernon and Eva of the moment went through, their creators and interpreters knew in their heart of hearts that all was going to end well, for otherwise they would speedily have lost their pinnacled eminence as writers of serial stories in the daily press. It is true that Philip's voice often shook as he read, and that Phœbe's eyes were dim as she listened to the written tale of the remarkable

disasters and misunderstandings through which the children of her brain had to pass; but these were but luxurious and sterile sorrows. In fact, the greatest trial that ever came to them during these halcyon years was when the editor of one of the papers in which the tale was running wrote to say that it was so popular that he insisted on having at least another fortnight of it, instead of bringing it to an end in two more instalments.

That entailed a vast deal of work, for Phœbe had to search the file to find out by what constructive carpentering she could engineer an episode that would be of the requisite length; for the last instalment of all, when the severed were reunited, must naturally be left for the end. But she never failed to manage it somehow, and even when tribulation was great, and for the moment she could not conceive how to spin the story out, her cloud had a silver lining, for all this difficult work was due to the story's amazing popularity. Or sometimes some ill-mannered reader would write to the newspaper office to point out that St. Peter's Church at Rome did not stand on a "commanding eminence," or ask more information about the "glittering spires" on the Acropolis at Athens, or demur to the "pellucid waters of the Nile in flood, as it rolled down in blue cataracts studded with milk-white foam." But otherwise their life flowed on in an unbroken succession of literary triumphs and domestic happiness.

Then suddenly without any warning whatever the curtain was rung up on a psychological tragedy; for Philip, by some species of spiritual infection from his wife, began to develop an imagination. It did not at first threaten to attack what Phœbe in a Gallic moment had once called their "*vie intérieure*," by which she meant their literary labours, but was directly concerned only with the present of a safety razor which she had made him on his birthday, in order to save cotton-wool and his life-blood. This safety razor consisted of a neat little sort of a rake into which razor blades were fitted. Each of these, when blunted by use, was to be thrown away and a fresh one inserted, and that morning, Philip, finding that his blade had begun to lose its edge, tossed it lightly and airily out of his dressing-room window, from which it fell into a herbaceous border which ran along the house. The new blade gave the utmost satisfaction, and precisely at nine-thirty he lit his first pipe and began his work for the day on Phœbe's scenario.

The dining-room was just below his dressing-room, and at that moment there came a rustle from the herbaceous bed, and Phœbe's adorable Persian cat leaped on to the window-sill from outside, and proceeded to make its toilet in the warm May sunshine. And at that precise and fatal moment Philip Partington's imagination began to work. It stirred within him like the first faint pang of a toothache. For some quarter of an hour he refused to recognize its existence, and proceeded to clothe in suitable language the flight of Eva up the frozen Thames in an ice-ship. Not knowing exactly what an ice-ship was, and being aware that his readers would be similarly ignorant, he evolved a beautiful one out of his inner consciousness that "skimmed along" on a single runner like a skate. It was not, he reflected, any less likely that it should keep its balance than that a bicycle should....

Suddenly he laid down his pen. His imagination was beginning to hurt him. It would be a terrible thing if Phœbe's cat, while it prowled though the herbaceous bed, stepped on the blade of the safety razor. Blunt though it was for shaving purposes, it would easily inflict a cruel wound on Tommy's paw. When his work was done, he must really hunt for the blade, and bestow it in some safer place.

He took up his pen again and wrote, "Ever faster through the deepening winter twilight sped the ice-ship, and Eva controlling the tiller in her long taper fingers, watched the dusky banks fly past her. 'Oh, God,' she murmured, 'grant that I may be in time!' The woods of Richmond...."

The cat had finished its toilet and jumped down again into the herbaceous bed. Philip heard a faint mew, and his awaking imagination told him that Tommy had cut his foot already. With a spasm of remorse he ran out into the garden and began a frenzied search for the razor-blade which with such culpable carelessness he had thrown away. A quarter of an hour's search was rewarded by its discovery, and as there was no blood on the edge of it he thankfully assumed that he had not been punished (nor Tommy either) for his thoughtlessness. He unfortunately stepped on a fine calceolaria, and regained the gravel path with the blade in his hand.

He locked it up in the drawer of his knee-hole table, where he kept his will and his pass-book and his cheque book, and with a free mind

returned to Eva, perilously voyaging on the ice past the woods of Richmond, and praying that she should be “in time.” But suddenly, and for the first time in their dual and prosperous career as *feuilleton* writers, Philip found himself finding a certain want of actuality in Phœbe’s imaginings. They lacked the bite of such realism as he had found illustrated in the poignancy of his own search for the discarded razor-blade in the herbaceous border. There was emotion, real human emotion, though only concerned with the paws of a cat and a razor, whereas Eva’s taper fingers on the tiller of this remarkable craft seemed to want the solidity of mortal experience. But it would never do to lose faith in Phœbe’s inventions, for it was his faith in them that lent him his unique skill as interpreter and chronicler of them. And, anyhow, the razor-blade was safely inaccessible now to any cat on its pleasure excursions, and he turned his mind back to the woods of Richmond.

With the unexpectedness of a clock loudly chiming, his imagination began to work again. What if he should suddenly die even as he sat there at his table! Phœbe alone knew where his will was kept, and he saw her, blind with tears, unlocking the drawer and groping with trembling hand among its contents. Suddenly she would start back with a cry of pain, and withdraw her hand, on which the fast-flowing blood denoted that she had severed an artery or two, and would bleed to death in a few seconds, as had happened to a most obnoxious Marquis in the tale, “Kind hearts are more than coronets.”

Next moment he had unlocked the drawer, and gingerly holding the dread instrument of Phœbe’s death between finger and thumb, looked wildly round for some secure asylum for the hateful thing. Long he stood there in hesitation; then, mounting a set of “library steps,” deposited it on the top of the tall bookcase which held the complete file of all the newspapers in which their tales had appeared. Then he set to work again on Eva, who presently ran her ice-boat ashore below the Star and Garter hotel. But half the morning had already gone, and he had scarcely yet made a beginning of the morning’s work.

Phœbe was unusually buoyant at lunch time to-day, but for once her cheerfulness failed in shedding sunshine on Philip.

“My dear, I have got over such a difficult point,” she said. “Do you remember how Moses Isaacson got Algernon to sign the paper which acknowledged that he was not Lord St. Austell’s legitimate son?”

“Yes, yes,” said Philip feverishly, trying to recall the exact happening of those miserable events.

“Well, all that was written in invisible ink, and all he thought he signed was the lease of Eagles Castle. There! And look, here is the first dish of asparagus.”

“And how about the lease?” asked Philip.

“It was written in water-colour ink, and, of course, Moses Isaacson washed it off afterwards.”

“Capital!” said Philip. “That does the trick.”

There was silence for a minute or two as the novelists ate the fresh asparagus, and then Phœbe said:

“To-morrow, dear, you will have to come and work with me in the drawing-room. The maids must begin their spring cleaning, and indeed it should have been done a month ago. We will have lunch and dinner in the hall while they do this room, and the day after they will do the drawing-room, and I will do my work with you here.”

Philip’s fingers were stealing towards the last stick of asparagus, but at this they were suddenly arrested.

“Ah, spring cleaning!” he said with assumed cheerfulness. “They just dust the books, I suppose, and sweep the floor.”

She laughed. She had Eva’s celebrated laugh, which was like a peal of silver bells.

“Indeed, they do much more than that,” she said. “Every book is taken out and dusted; they move all the furniture, and clean it all, back and front and top and bottom. But you won’t know a thing about it, except that our dear Elizabethan dining-room will look so spick and span that Elizabeth herself might have dinner in it. Some day we must do an historical novel, you and I. Think what a setting we have here!”

Though the day was so deliciously warm, it felt rather chilly in the evening, or so Philip thought, and a fire was lit in the drawing-room. Phœbe had a slight headache, and thus it was quite natural that she should go to bed early, leaving her husband sitting up. As soon as he had heard the door of her bedroom close, he went softly to the dining-room, and again mounting the library-steps, took down the razor-blade from the *cache* which this morning had seemed so secure, and went back with it into the drawing-room. It would have been terrible if Jane, the housemaid, who always sang at her work, should to-morrow have suddenly interrupted her warblings with a wild scream, as she dusted the top of the bookcase. Perhaps the razor-blade would have embedded itself in her hand; perhaps, even more tragically, her flapping duster would have flicked it into her smiling and songful face, and have buried it deep in her eye or her open mouth. But now this gruesome domestic tragedy had been averted by Philip's ingenious perception of the chilliness of the evening, and with a sigh of relief he dropped the fatal blade into the core of the fire.

He went softly up to bed, feeling very tired after this emotional day. Now that his anxiety was allayed he would have liked to tell Phœbe how silly he had been, for never before had he had a secret from her. But then one of Phœbe's most sacred idols in life was her husband's stern masculine common sense that (like Algernon's) was never the prey of foolish fears and unfounded tremors. He hated the idea of smashing up this cherished image of Phœbe's, and determined to keep his unaccountable failing to himself. Phœbe should never know. Besides, it would vex her very much to be told that her present to him had occasioned him such uneasiness.

He fell asleep at once, and woke in the grey dawn of the morning to the sound, as it were, of clashing cymbals of terror in his brain.... The housemaid would clear up the fireplace in the drawing-room, and there among the ashes, like a snake in the grass, would be the keen tooth of the razor-blade. Perhaps already Philip was too late, and before he could get down a cry of pain would ring through the silent house, betokening that Jane's life-blood was already spreading over the new Kidderminster carpet, and he sprang from his bed and with bare feet went hurriedly down to the drawing-room.

Thank God he was in time, and a minute afterwards he was on his way up to bed again with the razor-blade still dusty with ashes, but as sharp as ever, in an envelope taken from Phœbe's table. Temporarily, he put it between his mattresses, and, since it was still only half-past four, climbed back into bed, and vainly attempted to compose himself to sleep.

Already he was behindhand with work that should have been done yesterday morning, and when to-day, with the envelope containing the blade in his breast-pocket, he tried to make up for lost time, he only succeeded in losing more of it. There were other distractions as well, for owing to the spring cleaning in progress in the dining-room, he sat with Phœbe in the drawing-room, and she, quite recovered from her headache, and quite undisturbed by his presence, was reeling off sheet after sheet in her big, firm handwriting of the further trials that awaited Algernon. Sometimes she looked up at him with a bright, glad smile, born of the joy of creation; but for the most part her head was bent over her work, and but a short peal of silver-bell laughter from time to time denoted the ecstasy of invention. And falling more and more behind her, Philip lumbered in her wake, with three-quarters of his mind entirely absorbed in the awful problem regarding the contents of the envelope in his breast-pocket.

Suddenly, brighter than the noonday outside, an idea illuminated him, and he got up.

"I shall take ten minutes' stroll, my dear," he said. "*Solvitur ambulando*, you know, and you have given me a difficult chapter to write!"

She recalled herself with an effort to the real world.

"I think I won't come with you, darling," she said. "I am afraid of breaking the golden thread, as you once called it. Let me see ..." and she grabbed the golden thread again.

At the bottom of the garden ran a swift chalk-stream that had often figured in their joint works, and towards this Philip joyfully hurried. He picked up half a dozen pebbles from the gravel path, put them into the envelope which contained the instrument of death, tucked the flap in, and threw it into the stream. There was a slight splash, and he saw the white envelope shiningly sink through the water until it came to rest at the

bottom. He returned to Phœbe with the sense that he had awoke from some strangling nightmare.

For a couple of days after that Philip enjoyed the ecstasy which succeeds the removal of some haunting terror. Basking in the sunshine of security, he could look down on the dark clouds through which he had passed, and feel with thankfulness how completely (though narrowly) he had escaped the misty fringe of some trouble of the brain, the claws and teeth and pincers of a fixed idea. The simple expedient of throwing the razor-blade into the stream had entirely dispersed those clouds, and till then he had never known the sweetness and sanity of the sun. Then, with tropical rapidity, the tempest closed in upon him again.

He and Phœbe had driven out in their motor-car one afternoon, and had dismissed it two miles from home in order to have the pleasure of walking back through the flowery lanes. Philip was something of a botanist, and since he was now engaged on the chronicling of the reunion of Eva and Algernon, which unexpectedly took place in a ruined temple near Rome, he wanted to refresh his memory by the sight of the glories of the early English summer, in order to deck the flowery fields in which the ruined temple lay with the utmost possible lavishness of floral tapestry.

“The ruin stands for the trial they have passed through, my dear,” he explained to Phœbe, “and lo, all round Nature breaks into gladness!”

Phœbe gave a deep sigh.

“I think that’s lovely,” she said. “How you embellish my dry skeleton of a tale, darling, covering it with strong muscles and lovely supple skin. We *are* happy, aren’t we? I wonder if Algernon and Eva were really as happy, even at that moment, as we always are!”

They had come near to the stream that flowed by the bottom of the garden, the bank of which was a tangle of flowers.

“Loosestrife, meadow-sweet, marsh-marigold, willow-herb,” said Philip. “Delicious names, are they not?”

The sound of shrill juvenile voices was heard, and turning a bend in the lane, they came opposite the pool where Philip had thrown the razor-blade. There on the bank were half a dozen small boys in various degrees of nudity, and rosy from their bathing.

“Little darlings!” said Phœbe sympathetically. “What a jolly time they have been having in the water!”

“Willow-herb, marsh-marigold,” murmured Philip mechanically, looking round for the traces of blood on the stream-bank....

He took a firm hold of himself, and managed to walk across the wooden bridge that led to the bottom of the garden with some show of steadiness. But he almost reeled and fell when, looking into the pool, he saw the razor-blade, its encompassing envelope having been destroyed by the water, shining on the pebbly bottom of the stream like tragic Rhinegold.

When they had had tea, he made some lame excuse of studying flowers a little longer and slipped down again to the stream. The boys had gone, and taking off his shoes and socks, and rolling his trousers up to the knee, he waded out over the sharp pebbles to where his doom flickered in the sunshine. With the aid of his stick he propelled it into shallower waters and picked it up. Then, shivering from the brisk water, and tearing his socks as he pulled them over his wet feet, he returned with it to the house in a state of more miserable dejection than Algernon had ever been, even when he sat down on the ruins of the Roman temple, unaware that Eva was just about to come round the corner with April in her eyes.

For the next week Philip carried the razor-blade about with him in a stud-box that during the day never left his pocket, and at night reposed under his pillow. He made several attempts to get rid of it in a way that commended itself to his conscience, which seethed with scruples and imaginary terrors, burying it once in the garden, and at another time throwing it into the ash-bin. But the sight of his terrier digging in the potato patch for a suitable hiding place for his bone, caused him to disinter it from the first of these, and the second entailed a dismal midnight visit to the dust-bin, when, one evening, Phœbe casually alluded to the dustman’s approaching visit.

On another occasion he was fired with the original notion of embedding it in the interstices of the rough bark of the ilex at the end of the garden, well out of reach of curious fingers, and with the stud-box in his pocket, climbed with infinite difficulty up into its lower branches. But while wedging it into a suitable crevice the bough on which his weight rested suddenly gave way, and he fell heavily to the ground, while the blade flashed through the air like Excalibur and plunged into a bramble-bush. It was, of course, necessary to get it out, and this prickly business, combined with a sprained ankle, brought him almost aground in the shoals of despair. He began contemplating enlisting as a private in the British army, though well over the military age and of obese figure. Perhaps he would find some opportunity in Flanders of throwing it, suitably weighted, into a German trench. Only the thought of Phœbe left alone and making up interminable plots, with no one to turn them into narrative for her, kept him from this desperate step.

Meantime his work halted and languished, for sleepless nights and nightmare days miserably affected his power of composition, his style and even such matters as punctuation and spelling. Phœbe grew anxious about him, and recommended a holiday, but he had the wisdom to know that the only thing that kept him on the safe side of the frontier between sanity and madness was determined application to work, however poor the output was. He felt that he might just as well pack his boxes and go straight to Bedlam instead of making a circuitous journey there *via* the Malvern Hills.

It was when his condition was at its worst that there gleamed a light through the tunnel of his despair. The editor of the *Yorkshire Telegraph*, who wanted another story by the Partingtons, with the shortest possible delay, wrote to him suggesting in the most delicate manner that life in New York would present an admirable setting for a tale, especially since the United States had come into the war, and offering to pay his passage to that salubrious city if he would favourably consider this proposal. And all at once Philip remembered having read in some book of physical geography, studied by him in happier boyish days, that the Atlantic in certain places was not less than seven miles deep....

He read this amiable epistle to his wife.

“Upon my word, it sounds a very good plan,” he said brightly. “What do you say, Phœbe? It will give me the holiday of which you think I stand in need.”

Phœbe shook her head.

“Do you propose that I should come with you?” she asked. “Why should a holiday among the submarines do you more good than the Malvern Hills?”

The thought of the deep holes in the Atlantic grew ever more rosy to Philip’s mind. Even the hideous notion of being torpedoed failed to take the colour out of it.

“My dear, these are days in which a man must not mind taking risks,” he said.

She smiled at him.

“I know your fearless nature, darling,” she said; “but what is the point of running unnecessary risks?”

“Local colour. There is a great deal in Mr. Etherington’s remarks.”

“I don’t agree. I should think with our experience we ought to be able to describe New York without going there. We didn’t find it necessary to go to Athens, or Khartoum, or Mexico.”

“True,” said he; “but perhaps my descriptions might have gained in veracity if we had. That was a tiresome letter to the *Yorkshire Telegraph* about the spires on the Acropolis. If we had been there, we should have known that there weren’t any.”

He fingered the stud-box in his pocket for a moment, and his fingers itched to drop it over a ship’s side.

“My part of our joint work might gain in true artistic feeling,” he said, “if I described what I had actually seen. Art holds the mirror up to nature, you know.”

“Yes, darling; but do you think Shakespeare meant that Art must hold the mirror up to New York?” asked she. “I fancy there is very little nature in New York.”

He took a turn or two up and down the room, while the box positively burned his finger-tips.

“I can’t help feeling as I do about it,” he said. “And, Phœbe, one of our earliest vows to each other was that each of us should respect the other’s literary conscience!”

She got up.

“You disarm me, dear,” she said. “Apply for your passport, and if they give it you, go. I only ask you to respect my feminine weakness and not make me come with you among all those horrid submarines.”

They sealed their compact with a kiss.

By the time Phœbe had interviewed her cook, her husband had already written his letter applying for his passport, on the grounds of artistic necessity in his profession. She read it through with high approval.

“Very dignified and proper,” she said. “By the way, dear, there will be no work for us this morning. We are going over the factory for explosives with kind Captain Traill. You and I must observe the processes very carefully, as we want all the information we can get for ‘The Hero of Ypres.’”

He jumped up with something of his old alacrity.

“Aha, there speaks your artistic conscience,” he said. “And don’t let me see too many soft glances between you and kind Captain Traill.”

Phœbe looked hugely delighted and returned the compliment.

“And there are some very pretty girls working there,” she observed slyly.

An hour afterwards they were padding in felt slippers round the room where bombs were packed with a fatal grey treacle, one spoonful of which was sufficient to blow them and the whole building into a million

fragments. A new type of bomb was being made there, consisting of a cast-iron shell fitted with a hole through which the grey treacle was poured; an iron stopper was then screwed into the hole. There were hundreds of those empty shells, which slid along grooved ways to where the treacle was put into them, and they then were passed on to the girls, who fixed their stoppers. It was all soft, silent, deadly work, and Philip recorded a hundred impressions on his retentive memory.

Phœbe and Captain Traill were walking just ahead of him, when suddenly a great light broke, so vividly illuminating his brain that he almost thought some terrific explosion, seen and not heard, had occurred. Stealthily he drew from his pocket the stud-case, stealthily he opened it and took out the razor-blade. Then, bending over an empty bomb-case as if to examine it, he dropped the blade into it. It fell inside with a slight chink, which nobody noticed.

A couple of minutes afterwards the bomb-case had passed through the hands of the dispenser of treacle, and had its stopper screwed in.

“And where are all those little surprise packets going?” asked Philip airily.

“To aeroplanes on the west front,” said kind Captain Traill. “We’re sending off a lot to-night. Perhaps that one”—and he pointed to the identical bomb which Philip had had a hand in filling—“will make a mess in Mannheim next week.”

“I hope so,” said Philip fervently.

The only thing, now that Philip had disposed of the razor-blade, that clouded his complete content was the fear that his passport would be granted him, and that he would have to make a journey to America. Happily no such unnerving calamity occurred, for a week later he received a polite intimation from the passport office that the object for which he wanted to go there did not seem of sufficient importance to warrant the granting of a permit; so, wreathed in smiles, he passed this letter over to Phœbe.

“There’s the end of that,” he said.

“Philistines! Barbarians!” she said indignantly.

“I suppose they are acting to the best of their judgment,” said he. “I dare say they have never heard of me.”

“My dear, don’t be so cynical,” said Phœbe.

“Well, well! Certainly I am bitterly disappointed.”

He took up the morning paper.

“Bitterly!” he said again. “Hallo! Our airmen bombed Mannheim two nights ago, and dropped three tons of high explosives. Well, that is very interesting. Captain Traill said that perhaps some of those bombs which we saw being filled would make a mess in Mannheim. I hope they were those actual ones.”

“So do I,” said Phœbe. “Was there much damage done?”

“The German account says that there was hardly any, but of course that is the German account. A few people were wounded and cut by fragments of the bombs. Cut!”

He got up and could hardly refrain from dancing round the table among the rushes.

“Some deep cuts, I shouldn’t wonder,” he said.

The Face of the Poor

Mr. Anthony attached a memorandum to the letter he was reading, and put his hand on the bell.

"Confound them!" he said under his breath, "what do they think I'm made of!"

A negro opened the door, and came into the room with exaggerated decorum.

"Rufus, take this to Mr. Whitwell, and tell him to get the answer off at once. Is any one waiting?"

"Yes, suh, several. One man's been there some time. Says his name's Busson, suh."

"Send him in."

The man gave his head a tilt forward which seemed to close his eyes, turned pivotally about, and walked out of the room in his most luxurious manner. Rufus never imitated his employer, but he often regretted that his employer did not imitate him.

Mr. Anthony's face resumed its look of prosperous annoyance. The door opened, and a small, roughly dressed man came toward the desk.

"Well, here I am at last," he said in a tone of gentle apology; "I suppose you think it's about time."

The annoyance faded out of Mr. Anthony's face, and left it blank. The visitor put out a work-callous hand.

"I guess you don't remember me; my name's Burson. I was up once before, but you were busy. I hope you're well; you look hearty."

Mr. Anthony shook the proffered hand, and then shrank back, with the distrust of geniality which is one of the cruel hardships of wealth.

"I am well, thank you. What can I do for you, Mr. Burson?"

The little man sat down and wiped the back of his neck with his handkerchief. He was bearded almost to the eyes, and his bushy brows stood out in a thatch. As he bent his gaze upon Mr. Anthony it was like some gentle creature peering out of a brushy covert.

"I guess the question's what I can do for you, Mr. Anthony," he said, smiling wistfully on the millionaire; "I hain't done much this far, sure."

"Well?" Mr. Anthony's voice was dryly interrogative.

"When Edmonson told me he'd sold the mortgage to you, I thought certain I'd be able to keep up the interest, but I haven't made out to do even that; you've been kept out of your money a long time, and to tell the truth I don't see much chance for you to get it. I thought I'd come in and talk with you about it, and see what we could agree on."

Mr. Anthony leaned back rather wearily.

"I might foreclose," he said.

The visitor looked troubled. "Yes, you could foreclose, but that wouldn't fix it up. To tell the truth, Mr. Anthony, I don't feel right about it. I haven't kep' up the place as I'd ought; it's been running down for more'n a year. I don't believe it's worth the mortgage to-day."

Some of the weariness disappeared from Mr. Anthony's face. He laid his arms on the desk and leaned forward.

"You don't think it's worth the mortgage?" he asked.

"Not the mortgage and interest. You see there's over three hundred dollars interest due. I don't believe you could get more'n a thousand dollars cash for the place."

"There would be a deficiency judgment, then," said the millionaire.

"Well, that's what I wanted to ask you about. I supposed the law was arranged some way so you'd get your money. It's no more'n right. But it seems a kind of a pity for you and me to go to law. There ain't nothing between us. I had the money, and you the same as loaned it to me. It was money you'd saved up again old age, and you'd ought to have it. If I'd worked the place and kep' it up right, it would be worth more, though of

course property's gone down a good deal. But mother and the girls got kind of discouraged and wanted me to go to peddlin' fruit, and of course you can't do more'n one thing at a time, and do it justice. Now if you had the place, I expect you could afford to keep it up, and I wouldn't wonder if you could sell it; but you'd have to put some ready money into it first, I'm afraid."

Mr. Anthony pushed a pencil up and down between his thumb and forefinger, and watched the process with an inscrutable face. His visitor went on:—

"I was thinking if we could agree on a price, I might deed it to you and give you a note for the balance of what I owe you. I'm getting on kind of slow, but I don't believe but what I could pay the note after a while."

Mr. Anthony kept his eyes on his lead pencil with a strange, whimsical smile.

"Edmonson owed me two thousand dollars," he said, "the mortgage really cost me that; at least it was all I got on the debt."

The visitor made a regretful sound with his tongue against the roof of his mouth.

"You don't say so! Well, that is too bad."

The thatch above the speaker's eyes stood out straight as he reflected.

"You're worse off than I thought," he went on slowly, "but it don't quite seem as if I ought to be held responsible for that. I had the thousand dollars, and used it, and I'd ought to pay it; but the other—it was a kind of a trade you made—I can't see—you don't think"—

Mr. Anthony broke into his hesitation with a short laugh.

"No, I don't think you're responsible for my blunders," he said soberly. "You say property has gone down a good deal," he went on, fixing his shrewd eyes on his listener. "A good many other things have gone down. If my money will buy more than it would when it was loaned, some people would say I shouldn't have so much of it. Perhaps I'm not entitled to

more than the place will bring. What do you think about that?" There was a quizzical note in the rich man's voice.

Burson wiped the back of his neck with his handkerchief, dropped it into his hat, and shook the hat slowly and reflectively, keeping time with his head.

"If you'd kep' your money by you, allowin' that you loaned it to me,—because you the same as did,—if you'd kep' it by you or put it in the bank and let it lay idle, you'd 'a' had it. It wouldn't 'a' gone down any. You hadn't ought to lose anything, that I can see,—except of course for your mistake about Edmonson. That kind of hurts me about Edmonson. I wouldn't 'a' thought it of him. He always seemed a clever sort of fellow."

"Oh, Edmonson's all right," said Mr. Anthony; "he went into some things too heavily, and broke up. I guess he'll make it yet."

Burson looked relieved. "Then he'll straighten this up with you, after all," he said.

Mr. Anthony whistled noiselessly. "Well, hardly. He considers it straightened."

Burson turned his old hat slowly around between his knees.

"He's a fair-spoken man, Edmonson; I kind of think he'll square it up, after all," he said hopefully. "Anyway, it doesn't become me to throw stones till I've paid my own debts."

The hair that covered the speaker's mouth twitched a little in its effort to smile. He glanced at his companion expectantly.

"Could you come out and take a look at the place?" he asked.

Mr. Anthony slid down in his chair, and clasped his hands across his portliness.

"I believe I'll take your valuation, Burson," he answered slowly; "if I find there's nothing against the property but my mortgage, and you'll give me a deed and your note for the interest, or, say, two hundred and fifty dollars, we'll call it square. It will take a few days to look the matter up, a

week, perhaps. Suppose you come in at the end of the week. Your wife will sign the deed?" he added interrogatively.

Burson had leaned forward to get up. At the question he raised his eyes with the look that Mr. Anthony remembered to have seen years ago in small creatures he had driven into corners.

"Mother didn't have to sign the mortgage," he said, halting a little before each word, "the lawyer said it wasn't necessary. I don't know if she'll"—

Mr. Anthony broke into his embarrassment. "Let me see." He put his hand on the bell.

"Ask Mr. Evert to send me the mortgage from Burson to Edmonson, assigned to me," he said when Rufus appeared.

The negro walked out of the room as if he were carrying the message on his head.

"Mother doesn't always see things just as I do," said Burson; "she was willing to sign the mortgage, though," he added, "only she didn't need to; she wanted me to get the money of Edmonson."

He put his hand into his pocket, and a light of discovery came into his face.

"Have a peach," he said convivially, laying an enormous Late Crawford on the corner of the desk. Mr. Anthony gave an uncomprehending glance at the gift. "Hain't you got a knife?" asked Burson, straightening himself and drawing a bone-handled implement from his pocket; "I keep the big blade for fruit," he said kindly, as he laid it on the desk.

Mr. Anthony inspected the proffered refreshment with a queer, uncertain smile; then he took the peach from the desk, drew the wastebasket between his knees, opened the big blade of the knife, and began to remove the red velvet skin. The juice ran down his wrists and threatened his immaculate cuffs. He fished a spotless handkerchief from his pocket with his pencil and mopped up the encroaching rivulets. His companion smiled upon him with amiable relish as the dripping sections disappeared.

"I irrigated 'em more than usual this year, and it makes 'em kind of sloppy to eat," he apologized; "it doesn't help the flavor any, but most people buy for size. When you're out peddling and haven't time to cultivate, it's easy to turn on the water. It's about as bad as a milkman putting water in the milk, and I always feel mean about it. I tell mother irrigating's a lazy man's way of farming, but she says water costs so much here she doesn't think it's cheating to sell it for peach-juice."

Rufus came into the room, and bore down upon the pair with deferential disdain. Mr. Anthony gave his fingers a parting wipe, and took the papers from the envelope.

"It's all right, Burson," he said after a little, "you needn't mind about your wife's signature. I'll risk it. Come back in about a week, say Thursday, Thursday at ten, if that suits you. I'll have my attorney look into it."

Burson got up and started out. Then he turned and stood still an instant.

"Of course, I mean to tell mother about the deed," he said; "I wouldn't want you to think"—

"Oh, certainly, certainly," acquiesced Mr. Anthony with an almost violent waiving of domestic confidence. "Good-afternoon, Mr. Burson." He whirled his revolving chair toward the desk with a distinct air of dismissal, and picked up the package of papers.

After the door closed he sat still for some time, looking thoughtfully at the mortgage; then he made a memorandum in ink, with his signature in full, and attached it to the document. Rufus opened the door.

"Mr. Darnell and two other gentlemen, suh."

The millionaire set his jaws. "Show them in, Rufus. Damn it," he said softly,— "damn it, why can't they be honest!"

"Do you mean to tell me, Erastus Burson, that you deeded him this place, and gave him your note for two hundred and fifty dollars you didn't owe him?"

"Why, no, mother; didn't I explain to you there'd be a deficiency judgment?"

"Well, I should say there was. But if anybody's lackin' judgment I'd say it was you, not him. The idea! Why he's as rich as cream, and you're as poor"—

"Well, his being rich and me being poor hasn't got anything to do with it, mother; we're just two men trying to be fair with each other, don't you see? You and the girls wouldn't want me to be close-fisted and overreachin', even if I am poor. I think we fixed it up just as near right as a wrong thing can be fixed. Of course I don't like to feel the way I do about Edmonson, but Mr. Anthony don't seem to lay up anything against him, and he's the one that has the right to. Edmonson treated him worse than anybody ever treated me. I don't know just how I'd feel toward a man if he'd treated me the way Edmonson treated Mr. Anthony."

Mrs. Burson laid the overalls she was mending across her knee in a suggestive attitude.

"I don't call it close-fisted or overreachin' to keep a roof over your family's head," she argued; "if the place isn't ours, I suppose we'll have to leave it."

"No; Mr. Anthony wants us to stay here, and take care of the place for the rent. I feel as if I'd ought to keep it up better, but if I'm to peddle fruit and try to pay off the note, I'll have to hustle. I want to do the square thing by him. He's certainly treated me white."

Mrs. Burson fitted a patch on the seat of the overalls, and flattened it down with rather unnecessarily vigorous slaps of her large hand.

"I wouldn't lose any sleep over Mr. Anthony; I guess he's able to take care of himself," she said, closing her lips suddenly as if to prevent the escape of less amicable sentiments.

"Well, he doesn't seem to be," urged her husband, "the way Edmonson's overreached him. My! but I'd hate to be in that fellow's shoes: doin' dirt to a man that a way!"

Mrs. Burson sighed audibly, and gave her husband a hopelessly uncomprehending look. "You do beat all, Erastus," she said wearily. "Here's your overalls. I guess you can be trusted with 'em. They're too much patched to give to Mr. Anthony."

Burson returned her look of uncomprehension. Fortunately the marital fog through which two pairs of eyes so often view each other is more likely to dull the outline of faults than of virtues. Mrs. Burson watched her husband not unfondly as he straddled into his overalls and left the room.

"A man doesn't have to be very sharp to get the better of Erastus," she said to herself, "but he has to be awful low down; and I s'pose there's plenty that is."

The winter came smilingly on, tantalizing the farmer with sunny indifference concerning drouth, and when he was quite despondent sending great purple clouds from the southeast to wash away his fears. By Christmas the early oranges were yellowing. There had been no frost, and Burson's old spring-wagon and unshapely but well-fed sorrel team made their daily round of the valley, and now and then he dropped into Mr. Anthony's office to make small payments on his note. Pitifully small they seemed to the mortgagee, who appeared nevertheless always glad to receive them, and gave orders to Rufus, much to that dignitary's disgust, that the fruit-vender should always be admitted. The handful of coin which he so cheerfully piled on the corner of the rich man's desk always remained there until his departure, when Mr. Anthony took an envelope from the safe, swept the payment into it without counting, and returned it to its compartment, making no indorsement on the note.

"I'd feel better satisfied if you'd drive out some time and take a look at things," said Burson to his creditor during one of these visits; "you'd ought to get out of the office now and then for your health."

"Maybe I will, Burson," replied the capitalist. "You're not away from home all the time?"

"Oh, no, but I s'pose Sunday's your day off; it's mine. Mother and the girls generally go to church, but I don't. I tell 'm I'll watch, and they can pray. I can't very well go," he added, making haste to counteract the possible shock from his irreverence; "there ain't but one seat in the fruit-wagon, and when the women folks get their togs on, three's about all that can ride. Come out any Sunday, and stay for dinner. We mostly have chicken."

The following Sunday Mr. Anthony drew up his daintily-stepping chestnut at the fruit-peddler's gate. Before he had descended from his shining road-wagon, his host ran down the walk, pulling on his shabby coat.

"Well, now, this is something like!" he exclaimed. "Got a hitching-strap? Just wait till I open the gate; I believe I'd better take your horse inside. There's a post by the kitchen door. My, ain't he a beauty!"

Burson led the roadster through the gate, and Mr. Anthony walked by his side. When the horse was tied, the two men went about the place, and Erastus showed his guest the poultry and fruit trees, commenting on the merits of Plymouth Rocks and White Leghorns as layers, and displaying modest pride in the condition of the orchard.

"I've kep' it up better this year. The rains come along more favorable and the weeds didn't get ahead of me the way they did last winter. Look out, there!" he cried, as Mr. Anthony laid his hand on the head of a Jersey calf that backed awkwardly from under his grasp. "Don't let her get a hold of your coat-tail; she chawed mine to a frazzle the other day; the girls pet her so much she has no manners."

When the tour of the little farm was finished the two men came back to the veranda, and Erastus drew a rocking-chair from the front room for his guest. It was hung with patchwork cushions of "crazy" design, but Mr. Anthony leaned his tired head against them in the sanest content.

"Now you just sit still a minute," Erastus said, "and I'm a-going to bring you something you hain't tasted for a long time."

He darted into the house, and returned with a pitcher and two glasses.

"Sweet cider!" he announced, with a triumphant smile. "I had a lot of apples in the fall, not big enough to peddle,—you know our apples ain't anything to brag of,—and I just rigged up a kind of hand-press in the back yard, and now and then I press out a pitcher of cider for Sunday. I never let it get the least bit hard; not that I don't like a little tang to it myself, but mother belongs to the W.C.T.U., and it'd worry her."

He darted into the house again, and emerged with a plate of brown twisted cakes.

"Mother usually makes cookies on Saturday, but I can't find anything but these doughnuts. Maybe they won't go bad with the cider."

He poured his guest a glass, and Mr. Anthony drank it, holding a doughnut in one hand, and partaking of it with evident relish.

"It's good, Burson," he said. "May I have another glass and another doughnut?"

His host's countenance fairly shone with delighted hospitality as he replenished the empty glass. There were crumbs on the floor when the visitor left, and flies buzzed about the empty plate and pitcher as Mrs. Burson and her daughters came up the steps.

"Mr. Anthony's been here," said Erastus cheerfully; "I'm awful sorry you missed him. We had some cider and doughnuts."

The three women stopped suddenly, and stared at the speaker.

"Why, Paw Burson!" ejaculated the elder daughter, "did you give Mr. Anthony doughnuts and cider out here on this porch?"

"Why, yes, Millie," apologized the father; "I looked for cookies, but I couldn't find any. He said he liked doughnuts, and he did seem to relish 'em; he eat several."

"That awful rich man! Why, Paw Burson!"

The young woman gave an awe-stricken glance about her, as if expecting to discover some lingering traces of wealth.

"Doughnuts!" she repeated helplessly.

"Why, Millie," faltered the father, mildly aggressive, "I don't see why being rich should take away a man's appetite; I'm sure I hope I'll never be too rich to like doughnuts and cider."

"Didn't you give him a napkin, paw?" queried the younger girl.

"No," said the father meekly, "he had his handkerchief. I coaxed him to stay to dinner, but he couldn't; and I asked him to drive out some day with his wife and daughter—he hasn't but one—they lost a little girl when she was seven"—

The man's voice quivered on the last word, and died away. Mrs. Burson went hurriedly into the house. She reappeared at the door in a few minutes without her bonnet.

"Erastus," she said gently, "will you split me a few sticks of kindling before you put away the team?"

Mrs. Burson was fitting a salad-green bodice on her elder daughter. That young woman's efforts to see her own spine, where her mother was distributing pins with solemn intentness, had dyed her face a somewhat unnatural red, but the hands that lay upon her downy arms were much whiter than those that hovered about her back. A dining-table, bearing the more permanent part of its outfit, was pushed into a corner of the room, and covered with a yellow mosquito-net, and from the kitchen came a sound of crockery accompanied by an occasional splash and a scraping of tin. Now and then the younger girl appeared in the doorway and gazed in a sort of worshipful ecstasy at her sister's splendor.

"Do you think you'll get it finished for the Fiesta, maw?" she asked, between deep breaths of admiration. Mrs. Burson nodded absently, exploring her bosom for another pin with her outspread palm.

Her husband came into the room, and seated himself on the edge of the rep lounge. His face had a strange pallor above the mask of his beard.

"You're home early, Erastus," she said; then she looked up. "Are you sick?" she asked with anxiety.

"Mr. Anthony is dead," Burson said huskily.

"Dead! Why, Erastus!"

Mrs. Burson held a pin suspended in the air and stared at her husband.

"Yes. He dropped dead in his chair. Or rather, he had some kind of a stroke, and never came to. It happened more than a week ago. I went in to-day, and Rufus told me."

Mrs. Burson returned the pin to her bosom, and motioned her daughter toward the bedroom door.

"Go and take it off, Millie," she said soberly. She was shamefacedly conscious of something different from the grief that stirred her husband, something more sordid and personal.

"It hurt me all over," Burson went on, "the way some of them talked in town. They looked queer at me when I said what I did about him. I don't understand it."

"I guess there's a good many things you don't understand, Erastus," ventured the wife quietly.

A carriage stopped at the gate, and a young woman alighted from it, and came up the walk. Erastus saw her first, and met her in the open doorway. She looked at him with eager intentness.

"Is this Mr. Burson?" she asked gently. "I am Mr. Anthony's daughter."

Mrs. Burson got up, holding the scraps of green silk in her apron, and offered the visitor a seat. Erastus held out his hand, and tried to speak. The two faced each other in tearful silence.

"I wanted to bring you this myself," the girl faltered, "because—because of what is written on the outside." She held a package of papers toward him. "I have heard him speak of you, I think. Any friend of my father must be a good man. We want to thank you, my mother and I"—

"To thank me?" Erastus questioned, "to thank me! You certainly don't know"—

"I know you were my father's friend," the girl interrupted; "I don't care about the rest. Possibly I couldn't understand it. I know very little about business, but I knew my father."

She got up, holding her head high in grief-stricken pride, and gave her hand to her host and hostess.

The younger Burson girl emerged from the kitchen, a dish-towel and a half-wiped plate clasped to her breast, and watched the visitor as she went down the path.

"Her silk waist doesn't begin to touch Millie's for style," she said pensively, "and her skirt doesn't even drag; but there's something about her."

"Yes," acquiesced Mrs. Burson, "there is something about her."

Erastus sat on the edge of the old rep lounge, looking absently at the papers.

"In the event of my death, to be delivered to my friend Erastus Burson," was written on the package.

His wife came and stood over him.

"I don't know just what it means, mother," he said, "there's a deed, and my note marked 'Paid,' and a lot of two-bit and four-bit pieces. I'll have to get somebody to explain it."

He sat quite still until the woman laid her large hand on his bowed head. Then he looked up, with moist, winking eyes.

"I don't feel right about it, mother," he said. "I wish now I'd 'a' dropped in oftener, and been more sociable. It's a strange thing to say, but I

think sometimes he was lonesome; and I'm sure I don't know why, for a kinder, genialer man I never met."

Colonel Starbottle for the Plaintiff

It had been a day of triumph for Colonel Starbottle. First, for his personality, as it would have been difficult to separate the Colonel's achievements from his individuality; second, for his oratorical abilities as a sympathetic pleader; and third, for his functions as the leading counsel for the Eureka Ditch Company *versus* the State of California. On his strictly legal performances in this issue I prefer not to speak; there were those who denied them, although the jury had accepted them in the face of the ruling of the half-amused, half-cynical Judge himself. For an hour they had laughed with the Colonel, wept with him, been stirred to personal indignation or patriotic exaltation by his passionate and lofty periods—what else could they do than give him their verdict? If it was alleged by some that the American eagle, Thomas Jefferson, and the Resolutions of '98 had nothing whatever to do with the contest of a ditch company over a doubtfully worded legislative document; that wholesale abuse of the State Attorney and his political motives had not the slightest connection with the legal question raised—it was, nevertheless, generally accepted that the losing party would have been only too glad to have the Colonel on their side. And Colonel Starbottle knew this, as, perspiring, florid, and panting, he rebuttoned the lower buttons of his blue frock-coat, which had become loosed in an oratorical spasm, and readjusted his old-fashioned, spotless shirt frill above it as he strutted from the court-room amidst the hand-shakings and acclamations of his friends.

And here an unprecedented thing occurred. The Colonel absolutely declined spirituous refreshment at the neighboring Palmetto Saloon, and declared his intention of proceeding directly to his office in the adjoining square. Nevertheless the Colonel quitted the building alone, and apparently unarmed except for his faithful gold-headed stick, which hung as usual from his forearm. The crowd gazed after him with undisguised admiration of this new evidence of his pluck. It was remembered also that a mysterious note had been handed to him at the conclusion of his speech—evidently a challenge from the State Attorney. It was quite plain that the Colonel—a practised duellist—was hastening home to answer it.

But herein they were wrong. The note was in a female hand, and simply requested the Colonel to accord an interview with the writer at the Colonel's office as soon as he left the court. But it was an engagement that the Colonel—as devoted to the fair sex as he was to the "code"—was no less prompt in accepting. He flicked away the dust from his spotless white trousers and varnished boots with his handkerchief, and settled his black cravat under his Byron collar as he neared his office. He was surprised, however, on opening the door of his private office to find his visitor already there; he was still more startled to find her somewhat past middle age and plainly attired. But the Colonel was brought up in a school of Southern politeness, already antique in the republic, and his bow of courtesy belonged to the epoch of his shirt frill and strapped trousers. No one could have detected his disappointment in his manner, albeit his sentences were short and incomplete. But the Colonel's colloquial speech was apt to be fragmentary incoherencies of his larger oratorical utterances.

"A thousand pardons—for—er—having kept a lady waiting—er! But—er—congratulations of friends—and—er—courtesy due to them—er—interfered with—though perhaps only heightened—by procrastination—pleasure of—ha!" And the Colonel completed his sentence with a gallant wave of his fat but white and well-kept hand.

"Yes! I came to see you along o' that speech of yours. I was in court. When I heard you gettin' it off on that jury, I says to myself that's the kind o' lawyer *I* want. A man that's flowery and convincin'! Just the man to take up our case."

"Ah! It's a matter of business, I see," said the Colonel, inwardly relieved, but externally careless. "And—er—may I ask the nature of the case?"

"Well! it's a breach-o'-promise suit," said the visitor, calmly.

If the Colonel had been surprised before, he was now really startled, and with an added horror that required all his politeness to conceal. Breach-of-promise cases were his peculiar aversion. He had always held them to be a kind of litigation which could have been obviated by the prompt killing of the masculine offender—in which case he would have gladly defended the killer. But a suit for damages!—*damages!*—with the

reading of love-letters before a hilarious jury and court, was against all his instincts. His chivalry was outraged; his sense of humor was small—and in the course of his career he had lost one or two important cases through an unexpected development of this quality in a jury.

The woman had evidently noticed his hesitation, but mistook its cause. "It ain't me—but my darter."

The Colonel recovered his politeness. "Ah! I am relieved, my dear madam! I could hardly conceive a man ignorant enough to—er—er—throw away such evident good fortune—or base enough to deceive the trustfulness of womanhood—matured and experienced only in the chivalry of our sex, ha!"

The woman smiled grimly. "Yes!—it's my darter, Zaidee Hooker—so ye might spare some of them pretty speeches for *her*—before the jury."

The Colonel winced slightly before this doubtful prospect, but smiled. "Ha! Yes!—certainly—the jury. But—er—my dear lady, need we go as far as that? Cannot this affair be settled—er—out of court? Could not this—er—individual—be admonished—told that he must give satisfaction—personal satisfaction—for his dastardly conduct—to —er—near relative—or even valued personal friend? The—er—arrangements necessary for that purpose I myself would undertake."

He was quite sincere; indeed, his small black eyes shone with that fire which a pretty woman or an "affair of honor" could alone kindle. The visitor stared vacantly at him, and said, slowly:

"And what good is that goin' to do us?"

"Compel him to—er—perform his promise," said the Colonel, leaning back in his chair.

"Ketch him doin' it!" said the woman, scornfully. "No—that ain't wot we're after. We must make him *pay*! Damages—and nothin' short o' *that*."

The Colonel bit his lip. "I suppose," he said, gloomily, "you have documentary evidence—written promises and protestations—er—er—love-letters, in fact?"

"No—nary a letter! Ye see, that's jest it—and that's where *you* come in. You've got to convince that jury yourself. You've got to show what it is—tell the whole story your own way. Lord! to a man like you that's nothin'."

Startling as this admission might have been to any other lawyer, Starbottle was absolutely relieved by it. The absence of any mirth-provoking correspondence, and the appeal solely to his own powers of persuasion, actually struck his fancy. He lightly put aside the compliment with a wave of his white hand.

"Of course," said the Colonel, confidently, "there is strongly presumptive and corroborative evidence? Perhaps you can give me—er—a brief outline of the affair?"

"Zaidee kin do that straight enough, I reckon," said the woman; "what I want to know first is, kin you take the case?"

The Colonel did not hesitate; his curiosity was piqued. "I certainly can. I have no doubt your daughter will put me in possession of sufficient facts and details—to constitute what we call—er—a brief."

"She kin be brief enough—or long enough—for the matter of that," said the woman, rising. The Colonel accepted this implied witticism with a smile.

"And when may I have the pleasure of seeing her?" he asked, politely.

"Well, I reckon as soon as I can trot out and call her. She's just outside, meanderin' in the road—kinder shy, ye know, at first."

She walked to the door. The astounded Colonel nevertheless gallantly accompanied her as she stepped out into the street and called, shrilly, "You Zaidee!"

A young girl here apparently detached herself from a tree and the ostentatious perusal of an old election poster, and sauntered down towards the office door. Like her mother, she was plainly dressed; unlike her, she had a pale, rather refined face, with a demure mouth and downcast eyes. This was all the Colonel saw as he bowed profoundly and led the way into

his office, for she accepted his salutations without lifting her head. He helped her gallantly to a chair, on which she seated herself sideways, somewhat ceremoniously, with her eyes following the point of her parasol as she traced a pattern on the carpet. A second chair offered to the mother that lady, however, declined. "I reckon to leave you and Zaidee together to talk it out," she said; turning to her daughter, she added, "Jest you tell him all, Zaidee," and before the Colonel could rise again, disappeared from the room. In spite of his professional experience, Starbottle was for a moment embarrassed. The young girl, however, broke the silence without looking up.

"Adoniram K. Hotchkiss," she began, in a monotonous voice, as if it were a recitation addressed to the public, "first began to take notice of me a year ago. Arter that—off and on——"

"One moment," interrupted the astounded Colonel; "do you mean Hotchkiss the President of the Ditch Company?" He had recognized the name of a prominent citizen—a rigid ascetic, taciturn, middle-aged man—a deacon—and more than that, the head of the company he had just defended. It seemed inconceivable.

"That's him," she continued, with eyes still fixed on the parasol and without changing her monotonous tone—"off and on ever since. Most of the time at the Free-Will Baptist church—at morning service, prayer-meetings, and such. And at home—outside—er—in the road."

"Is it this gentleman—Mr. Adoniram K. Hotchkiss—who—er—promised marriage?" stammered the Colonel.

"Yes."

The Colonel shifted uneasily in his chair. "Most extraordinary! for—you see—my dear young lady—this becomes—a—er—most delicate affair."

"That's what maw said," returned the young woman, simply, yet with the faintest smile playing around her demure lips and downcast cheek.

"I mean," said the Colonel, with a pained yet courteous smile, "that this—er—gentleman—is in fact—er—one of my clients."

"That's what maw said, too, and of course your knowing him will make it all the easier for you," said the young woman.

A slight flush crossed the Colonel's cheek as he returned quickly and a little stiffly, "On the contrary—er—it may make it impossible for me to—er—act in this matter."

The girl lifted her eyes. The Colonel held his breath as the long lashes were raised to his level. Even to an ordinary observer that sudden revelation of her eyes seemed to transform her face with subtle witchery. They were large, brown, and soft, yet filled with an extraordinary penetration and prescience. They were the eyes of an experienced woman of thirty fixed in the face of a child. What else the Colonel saw there Heaven only knows! He felt his inmost secrets plucked from him—his whole soul laid bare—his vanity, belligerency, gallantry—even his medieval chivalry, penetrated, and yet illuminated, in that single glance. And when the eyelids fell again, he felt that a greater part of himself had been swallowed up in them.

"I beg your pardon," he said, hurriedly. "I mean—this matter may be arranged—er—amicably. My interest with—and as you wisely say—my—er—knowledge of my client—er—Mr. Hotchkiss—may affect—a compromise."

"And *damages*," said the young girl, readdressing her parasol, as if she had never looked up.

The Colonel winced. "And—er—undoubtedly *compensation*—if you do not press a fulfilment of the promise. Unless," he said, with an attempted return to his former easy gallantry, which, however, the recollection of her eyes made difficult, "it is a question of—er—the affections?"

"Which?" said his fair client, softly.

"If you still love him?" explained the Colonel, actually blushing.

Zaidee again looked up; again taking the Colonel's breath away with eyes that expressed not only the fullest perception of what he had *said*, but of what he thought and had not said, and with an added subtle

suggestion of what he might have thought. "That's tellin'," she said, dropping her long lashes again. The Colonel laughed vacantly. Then feeling himself growing imbecile, he forced an equally weak gravity. "Pardon me—I understand there are no letters; may I know the way in which he formulated his declaration and promises?"

"Hymn-books," said the girl, briefly.

"I beg your pardon," said the mystified lawyer.

"Hymn-books—marked words in them with pencil—and passed 'em on to me," repeated Zaidee. "Like 'love,' 'dear,' 'precious,' 'sweet,' and 'blessed,'" she added, accenting each word with a push of her parasol on the carpet. "Sometimes a whole line outer Tate and Brady—and *Solomon's Song*, you know, and sich."

"I believe," said the Colonel, loftily, "that the—er—phrases of sacred psalmody lend themselves to the language of the affections. But in regard to the distinct promise of marriage—was there—er—no *other* expression?"

"Marriage Service in the prayer-book—lines and words outer that—all marked," said Zaidee. The Colonel nodded naturally and approvingly. "Very good. Were others cognizant of this? Were there any witnesses?"

"Of course not," said the girl. "Only me and him. It was generally at church-time—or prayer-meeting. Once, in passing the plate, he slipped one o' them peppermint lozenges with the letters stamped on it 'I love you' for me to take."

The Colonel coughed slightly. "And you have the lozenge?"

"I ate it," said the girl, simply.

"Ah," said the Colonel. After a pause he added, delicately: "But were these attentions—er—confined to—er—sacred precincts? Did he meet you elsewhere?"

"Useter pass our house on the road," returned the girl, dropping into her monotonous recital, "and useter signal."

"Ah, signal?" repeated the Colonel, approvingly.

"Yes! He'd say 'Kerrow,' and I'd say 'Kerree.' Suthing like a bird, you know."

Indeed, as she lifted her voice in imitation of the call the Colonel thought it certainly very sweet and birdlike. At least as *she* gave it. With his remembrance of the grim deacon he had doubts as to the melodiousness of *his* utterance. He gravely made her repeat it.

"And after that signal?" he added, suggestively.

"He'd pass on," said the girl.

The Colonel coughed slightly, and tapped his desk with his penholder.

"Were there any endearments—er—caresses—er—such as taking your hand—er—clasping your waist?" he suggested, with a gallant yet respectful sweep of his white hand and bowing of his head;—"er— slight pressure of your fingers in the changes of a dance—I mean," he corrected himself, with an apologetic cough—"in the passing of the plate?"

"No;—he was not what you'd call 'fond,'" returned the girl.

"Ah! Adoniram K. Hotchkiss was not 'fond' in the ordinary acceptance of the word," said the Colonel, with professional gravity.

She lifted her disturbing eyes, and again absorbed his in her own. She also said "Yes," although her eyes in their mysterious prescience of all he was thinking disclaimed the necessity of any answer at all. He smiled vacantly. There was a long pause. On which she slowly disengaged her parasol from the carpet pattern and stood up.

"I reckon that's about all," she said.

"Er—yes—but one moment," said the Colonel, vaguely. He would have liked to keep her longer, but with her strange premonition of him he felt powerless to detain her, or explain his reason for doing so. He instinctively knew she had told him all; his professional judgment told him that a more hopeless case had never come to his knowledge. Yet he was not daunted, only embarrassed. "No matter," he said, vaguely. "Of course I shall

have to consult with you again." Her eyes again answered that she expected he would, but she added, simply, "When?"

"In the course of a day or two," said the Colonel, quickly. "I will send you word." She turned to go. In his eagerness to open the door for her he upset his chair, and with some confusion, that was actually youthful, he almost impeded her movements in the hall, and knocked his broad-brimmed Panama hat from his bowing hand in a final gallant sweep. Yet as her small, trim, youthful figure, with its simple Leghorn straw hat confined by a blue bow under her round chin, passed away before him, she looked more like a child than ever.

The Colonel spent that afternoon in making diplomatic inquiries. He found his youthful client was the daughter of a widow who had a small ranch on the cross-roads, near the new Free-Will Baptist church—the evident theatre of this pastoral. They led a secluded life; the girl being little known in the town, and her beauty and fascination apparently not yet being a recognized fact. The Colonel felt a pleasurable relief at this, and a general satisfaction he could not account for. His few inquiries concerning Mr. Hotchkiss only confirmed his own impressions of the alleged lover—a serious-minded, practically abstracted man—abstentive of youthful society, and the last man apparently capable of levity of the affections or serious flirtation. The Colonel was mystified—but determined of purpose—whatever that purpose might have been.

The next day he was at his office at the same hour. He was alone—as usual—the Colonel's office really being his private lodgings, disposed in connecting rooms, a single apartment reserved for consultation. He had no clerk; his papers and briefs being taken by his faithful body-servant and ex-slave "Jim" to another firm who did his office-work since the death of Major Stryker—the Colonel's only law partner, who fell in a duel some years previous. With a fine constancy the Colonel still retained his partner's name on his door-plate—and, it was alleged by the superstitious, kept a certain invincibility also through the *manes* of that lamented and somewhat feared man.

The Colonel consulted his watch, whose heavy gold case still showed the marks of a providential interference with a bullet destined for

its owner, and replaced it with some difficulty and shortness of breath in his fob. At the same moment he heard a step in the passage, and the door opened to Adoniram K. Hotchkiss. The Colonel was impressed; he had a duellist's respect for punctuality.

The man entered with a nod and the expectant, inquiring look of a busy man. As his feet crossed that sacred threshold the Colonel became all courtesy; he placed a chair for his visitor, and took his hat from his half-reluctant hand. He then opened a cupboard and brought out a bottle of whiskey and two glasses.

"A—er—slight refreshment, Mr. Hotchkiss," he suggested, politely. "I never drink," replied Hotchkiss, with the severe attitude of a total abstainer. "Ah—er—not the finest bourbon whiskey, selected by a Kentucky friend? No? Pardon me! A cigar, then—the mildest Havana."

"I do not use tobacco nor alcohol in any form," repeated Hotchkiss, ascetically. "I have no foolish weaknesses."

The Colonel's moist, beady eyes swept silently over his client's sallow face. He leaned back comfortably in his chair, and half closing his eyes as in dreamy reminiscence, said, slowly: "Your reply, Mr. Hotchkiss, reminds me of—er—sing'lar circumstances that —er—occurred, in point of fact—at the St. Charles Hotel, New Orleans. Pinkey Hornblower—personal friend—invited Senator Doolittle to join him in social glass. Received, sing'larly enough, reply similar to yours. 'Don't drink nor smoke?' said Pinkey. 'Gad, sir, you must be mighty sweet on the ladies.' Ha!" The Colonel paused long enough to allow the faint flush to pass from Hotchkiss's cheek, and went on, half closing his eyes: "'I allow no man, sir, to discuss my personal habits,' said Doolittle, over his shirt collar. 'Then I reckon shootin' must be one of those habits,' said Pinkey, coolly. Both men drove out on the Shell Road back of cemetery next morning. Pinkey put bullet at twelve paces through Doolittle's temple. Poor Doo never spoke again. Left three wives and seven children, they say —two of 'em black."

"I got a note from you this morning," said Hotchkiss, with badly concealed impatience. "I suppose in reference to our case. You have taken judgment, I believe." The Colonel, without replying, slowly filled a glass of whiskey and water. For a moment he held it dreamily before him, as if still

engaged in gentle reminiscences called up by the act. Then tossing it off, he wiped his lips with a large white handkerchief, and leaning back comfortably in his chair, said, with a wave of his hand, "The interview I requested, Mr. Hotchkiss, concerns a subject—which I may say is—er—er—at present *not* of a public or business nature—although *later* it might become—er—er—both. It is an affair of some—er—delicacy."

The Colonel paused, and Mr. Hotchkiss regarded him with increased impatience. The Colonel, however, continued, with unchanged deliberation: "It concerns—er—a young lady—a beautiful, high-souled creature, sir, who, apart from her personal loveliness—er—er—I may say is of one of the first families of Missouri, and—er—not—remotely connected by marriage with one of—er—er—my boyhood's dearest friends. The latter, I grieve to say, was a pure invention of the Colonel's—an oratorical addition to the scanty information he had obtained the previous day. The young lady," he continued, blandly, "enjoys the further distinction of being the object of such attention from you as would make this interview—really—a confidential matter—er—er—among friends and—er—er—relations in present and future. I need not say that the lady I refer to is Miss Zaidee Juno Hooker, only daughter of Almira Ann Hooker, relict of Jefferson Brown Hooker, formerly of Boone County, Kentucky, and latterly of—er—Pike County, Missouri."

The sallow, ascetic hue of Mr. Hotchkiss's face had passed through a livid and then a greenish shade, and finally settled into a sullen red. "What's all this about?" he demanded, roughly. The least touch of belligerent fire came into Starbottle's eye, but his bland courtesy did not change. "I believe," he said, politely, "I have made myself clear as between—er—gentlemen, though perhaps not as clear as I should to—er—er—jury."

Mr. Hotchkiss was apparently struck with some significance in the lawyer's reply. "I don't know," he said, in a lower and more cautious voice, "what you mean by what you call 'my attentions' to—any one—or how it concerns you. I have not exhausted half a dozen words with—the person you name—have never written her a line—nor even called at her house." He rose with an assumption of ease, pulled down his waistcoat, buttoned his coat, and took up his hat. The Colonel did not move. "I believe I have

already indicated my meaning in what I have called 'your attentions,'" said the Colonel, blandly, "and given you my 'concern' for speaking as—er—er mutual friend. As to *your* statement of your relations with Miss Hooker, I may state that it is fully corroborated by the statement of the young lady herself in this very office yesterday."

"Then what does this impertinent nonsense mean? Why am I summoned here?" said Hotchkiss, furiously.

"Because," said the Colonel, deliberately, "that statement is infamously—yes, damnably to your discredit, sir!"

Mr. Hotchkiss was here seized by one of those important and inconsistent rages which occasionally betray the habitually cautious and timid man. He caught up the Colonel's stick, which was lying on the table. At the same moment the Colonel, without any apparent effort, grasped it by the handle. To Mr. Hotchkiss's astonishment, the stick separated in two pieces, leaving the handle and about two feet of narrow glittering steel in the Colonel's hand. The man recoiled, dropping the useless fragment. The Colonel picked it up, fitting the shining blade in it, clicked the spring, and then rising, with a face of courtesy yet of unmistakably genuine pain, and with even a slight tremor in his voice, said, gravely:

"Mr. Hotchkiss, I owe you a thousand apologies, sir, that—er— a weapon should be drawn by me—even through your own inadvertence—under the sacred protection of my roof, and upon an unarmed man. I beg your pardon, sir, and I even withdraw the expressions which provoked that inadvertence. Nor does this apology prevent you from holding me responsible—personally responsible—*elsewhere* for an indiscretion committed in behalf of a lady—my—er—client."

"Your client? Do you mean you have taken her case? You, the counsel for the Ditch Company?" said Mr. Hotchkiss, in trembling indignation.

"Having won *your* case, sir," said the Colonel, coolly, "the—er— usages of advocacy do not prevent me from espousing the cause of the weak and unprotected."

"We shall see, sir," said Hotchkiss, grasping the handle of the door and backing into the passage. "There are other lawyers who—"

"Permit me to see you out," interrupted the Colonel, rising politely.

"—will be ready to resist the attacks of blackmail," continued Hotchkiss, retreating along the passage.

"And then you will be able to repeat your remarks to me *in the street*," continued the Colonel, bowing, as he persisted in following his visitor to the door.

But here Mr. Hotchkiss quickly slammed it behind him, and hurried away. The Colonel returned to his office, and sitting down, took a sheet of letter paper bearing the inscription "Starbottle and Stryker, Attorneys and Counsellors," and wrote the following lines:

Hooker *versus* Hotchkiss.

DEAR MADAM,—Having had a visit from the defendant in above, we should be pleased to have an interview with you at 2 p.m. to-morrow. Your obedient servants,

STARBOTTLE AND STRYKER.

This he sealed and despatched by his trusted servant Jim, and then devoted a few moments to reflection. It was the custom of the Colonel to act first, and justify the action by reason afterwards.

He knew that Hotchkiss would at once lay the matter before rival counsel. He knew that they would advise him that Miss Hooker had "no case"—that she would be non-suited on her own evidence, and he ought not to compromise, but be ready to stand trial. He believed, however, that Hotchkiss feared that exposure, and although his own instincts had been at first against that remedy, he was now instinctively in favor of it. He remembered his own power with a jury; his vanity and his chivalry alike approved of this heroic method; he was bound by the prosaic facts—he had his own theory of the case, which no mere evidence could gainsay. In fact, Mrs. Hooker's own words that "he was to tell the story in his own way" actually appeared to him an inspiration and a prophecy.

Perhaps there was something else, due possibly to the lady's wonderful eyes, of which he had thought much. Yet it was not her simplicity that affected him solely; on the contrary, it was her apparent intelligent reading of the character of her recreant lover—and of his own! Of all the Colonel's previous "light" or "serious" loves none had ever before flattered him in that way. And it was this, combined with the respect which he had held for their professional relations, that precluded his having a more familiar knowledge of his client, through serious questioning, or playful gallantry. I am not sure it was not part of the charm to have a rustic *femme incomprise* as a client.

Nothing could exceed the respect with which he greeted her as she entered his office the next day. He even affected not to notice that she had put on her best clothes, and he made no doubt appeared as when she had first attracted the mature yet faithless attentions of Deacon Hotchkiss at church. A white virginal muslin was belted around her slim figure by a blue ribbon, and her Leghorn hat was drawn around her oval cheek by a bow of the same color. She had a Southern girl's narrow feet, encased in white stockings and kid slippers, which were crossed primly before her as she sat in a chair, supporting her arm by her faithful parasol planted firmly on the floor. A faint odor of southernwood exhaled from her, and, oddly enough, stirred the Colonel with a far-off recollection of a pine-shaded Sunday school on a Georgia hillside and of his first love, aged ten, in a short, starched frock. Possibly it was the same recollection that revived something of the awkwardness he had felt then.

He, however, smiled vaguely and, sitting down, coughed slightly, and placed his fingertips together. "I have had an—er—interview with Mr. Hotchkiss, but—I—er—regret to say there seems to be no prospect of—er—compromise." He paused, and to his surprise her listless "company" face lit up with an adorable smile. "Of course!—ketch him!" she said. "Was he mad when you told him?" She put her knees comfortably together and leaned forward for a reply.

For all that, wild horses could not have torn from the Colonel a word about Hotchkiss's anger. "He expressed his intention of employing counsel—and defending a suit," returned the Colonel, affably basking in her smile. She dragged her chair nearer his desk. "Then you'll fight him

tooth and nail?" she said eagerly; "you'll show him up? You'll tell the whole story your own way? You'll give him fits?—and you'll make him pay? Sure?" she went on, breathlessly.

"I—er—will," said the Colonel, almost as breathlessly.

She caught his fat white hand, which was lying on the table, between her own and lifted it to her lips. He felt her soft young fingers even through the lisle-thread gloves that encased them and the warm moisture of her lips upon his skin. He felt himself flushing—but was unable to break the silence or change his position. The next moment she had scuttled back with her chair to her old position.

"I—er—certainly shall do my best," stammered the Colonel, in an attempt to recover his dignity and composure.

"That's enough! You'll *do* it," said the girl, enthusiastically. "Lordy! Just you talk for *me* as ye did for *his* old Ditch Company, and you'll fetch it—every time! Why, when you made that jury sit up the other day—when you got that off about the Merrikan flag waving equally over the rights of honest citizens banded together in peaceful commercial pursuits, as well as over the fortress of official proflig—"

"Oligarchy," murmured the Colonel, courteously.

"Oligarchy," repeated the girl, quickly, "my breath was just took away. I said to maw, 'Ain't he too sweet for anything!' I did, honest Injin! And when you rolled it all off at the end—never missing a word—(you didn't need to mark 'em in a lesson-book, but had 'em all ready on your tongue), and walked out—Well! I didn't know you nor the Ditch Company from Adam, but I could have just run over and kissed you there before the whole court!"

She laughed, with her face glowing, although her strange eyes were cast down. Alack! the Colonel's face was equally flushed, and his own beady eyes were on his desk. To any other woman he would have voiced the banal gallantry that he should now, himself, look forward to that reward, but the words never reached his lips. He laughed, coughed slightly, and when he looked up again she had fallen into the same attitude as on her first visit, with her parasol point on the floor.

"I must ask you to—er—direct your memory—to—er—another point; the breaking off of the—er—er—er—engagement. Did he—er—give any reason for it? Or show any cause?"

"No; he never said anything," returned the girl.

"Not in his usual way?—er—no reproaches out of the hymn-book?—or the sacred writings?"

"No; he just *quit*."

"Er—ceased his attentions," said the Colonel, gravely. "And naturally you—er—were not conscious of any cause for his doing so." The girl raised her wonderful eyes so suddenly and so penetratingly without reply in any other way that the Colonel could only hurriedly say: "I see! None, of course!"

At which she rose, the Colonel rising also. "We—shall begin proceedings at once. I must, however, caution you to answer no questions nor say anything about this case to any one until you are in court."

She answered his request with another intelligent look and a nod. He accompanied her to the door. As he took her proffered hand he raised the lisle-thread fingers to his lips with old-fashioned gallantry. As if that act had condoned for his first omissions and awkwardness, he became his old-fashioned self again, buttoned his coat, pulled out his shirt frill, and strutted back to his desk.

A day or two later it was known throughout the town that Zaidee Hooker had sued Adoniram Hotchkiss for breach of promise, and that the damages were laid at five thousand dollars. As in those bucolic days the Western press was under the secure censorship of a revolver, a cautious tone of criticism prevailed, and any gossip was confined to personal expression, and even then at the risk of the gossipier. Nevertheless, the situation provoked the intensest curiosity. The Colonel was approached—until his statement that he should consider any attempt to overcome his professional secrecy a personal reflection withheld further advances. The community were left to the more ostentatious information of the defendant's counsel, Messrs. Kitcham and Bilser, that the case was "ridiculous" and "rotten," that the plaintiff would be nonsuited, and the fire-eating Starbottle

would be taught a lesson that he could not "bully" the law—and there were some dark hints of a conspiracy. It was even hinted that the "case" was the revengeful and preposterous outcome of the refusal of Hotchkiss to pay Starbottle an extravagant fee for his late services to the Ditch Company. It is unnecessary to say that these words were not reported to the Colonel. It was, however, an unfortunate circumstance for the calmer, ethical consideration of the subject that the church sided with Hotchkiss, as this provoked an equal adherence to the plaintiff and Starbottle on the part of the larger body of non-church-goers, who were delighted at a possible exposure of the weakness of religious rectitude. "I've allus had my suspicions o' them early candle-light meetings down at that gospel shop," said one critic, "and I reckon Deacon Hotchkiss didn't rope in the gals to attend jest for psalm-singing." "Then for him to get up and leave the board afore the game's finished and try to sneak out of it," said another. "I suppose that's what they call *religious*."

It was therefore not remarkable that the courthouse three weeks later was crowded with an excited multitude of the curious and sympathizing. The fair plaintiff, with her mother, was early in attendance, and under the Colonel's advice appeared in the same modest garb in which she had first visited his office. This and her downcast modest demeanor were perhaps at first disappointing to the crowd, who had evidently expected a paragon of loveliness—as the Circe of the grim ascetic defendant, who sat beside his counsel. But presently all eyes were fixed on the Colonel, who certainly made up in *his* appearance any deficiency of his fair client. His portly figure was clothed in a blue dress-coat with brass buttons, a buff waistcoat which permitted his frilled shirt front to become erectile above it, a black satin stock which confined a boyish turned-down collar around his full neck, and immaculate drill trousers, strapped over varnished boots. A murmur ran round the court. "Old 'Personally Responsible' had got his war-paint on," "The Old War-Horse is smelling powder," were whispered comments. Yet for all that the most irreverent among them recognized vaguely, in this bizarre figure, something of an honored past in their country's history, and possibly felt the spell of old deeds and old names that had once thrilled their boyish pulses. The new District Judge returned Colonel Starbottle's profoundly punctilious bow. The Colonel was followed by his negro servant, carrying a parcel of hymn-

books and Bibles, who, with a courtesy evidently imitated from his master, placed one before the opposite counsel. This, after a first curious glance, the lawyer somewhat superciliously tossed aside. But when Jim, proceeding to the jury-box, placed with equal politeness the remaining copies before the jury, the opposite counsel sprang to his feet.

"I want to direct the attention of the Court to this unprecedented tampering with the jury, by this gratuitous exhibition of matter impertinent and irrelevant to the issue."

The Judge cast an inquiring look at Colonel Starbottle.

"May it please the Court," returned Colonel Starbottle with dignity, ignoring the counsel, "the defendant's counsel will observe that he is already furnished with the matter—which I regret to say he has treated—in the presence of the Court—and of his client, a deacon of the church—with—er—great superciliousness. When I state to your Honor that the books in question are hymn-books and copies of the *Holy Scriptures*, and that they are for the instruction of the jury, to whom I shall have to refer them in the course of my opening, I believe I am within my rights."

"The act is certainly unprecedented," said the Judge, dryly, "but unless the counsel for the plaintiff expects the jury to *sing* from these hymn-books, their introduction is not improper, and I cannot admit the objection. As defendant's counsel are furnished with copies also, they cannot plead 'surprise,' as in the introduction of new matter, and as plaintiff's counsel relies evidently upon the jury's attention to his opening, he would not be the first person to distract it." After a pause he added, addressing the Colonel, who remained standing, "The Court is with you, sir; proceed."

But the Colonel remained motionless and statuesque, with folded arms.

"I have overruled the objection," repeated the Judge; "you may go on."

"I am waiting, your Honor, for the—er—withdrawal by the defendant's counsel of the word 'tampering,' as refers to myself, and of 'impertinent,' as refers to the sacred volumes."

"The request is a proper one, and I have no doubt will be acceded to," returned the Judge, quietly. The defendant's counsel rose and mumbled a few words of apology, and the incident closed. There was, however, a general feeling that the Colonel had in some way "scored," and if his object had been to excite the greatest curiosity about the books, he had made his point.

But impassive of his victory, he inflated his chest, with his right hand in the breast of his buttoned coat, and began. His usual high color had paled slightly, but the small pupils of his prominent eyes glittered like steel. The young girl leaned forward in her chair with an attention so breathless, a sympathy so quick, and an admiration so artless and unconscious that in an instant she divided with the speaker the attention of the whole assemblage. It was very hot; the court was crowded to suffocation; even the open windows revealed a crowd of faces outside the building, eagerly following the Colonel's words.

He would remind the jury that only a few weeks ago he stood there as the advocate of a powerful company, then represented by the present defendant. He spoke then as the champion of strict justice against legal oppression; no less should he to-day champion the cause of the unprotected and the comparatively defenseless—save for that paramount power which surrounds beauty and innocence—even though the plaintiff of yesterday was the defendant of to-day. As he approached the court a moment ago he had raised his eyes and beheld the starry flag flying from its dome—and he knew that glorious banner was a symbol of the perfect equality, under the Constitution, of the rich and the poor, the strong and the weak—an equality which made the simple citizen taken from the plough in the veld, the pick in the gulch, or from behind the counter in the mining town, who served on that jury, the equal arbiters of justice with that highest legal luminary whom they were proud to welcome on the bench to-day. The Colonel paused, with a stately bow to the impassive Judge. It was this, he continued, which lifted his heart as he approached the building. And yet—he had entered it with an uncertain—he might almost say—a timid step. And why? He knew, gentlemen, he was about to confront a profound—aye! a sacred responsibility! Those hymn-books and holy writings handed to the jury were *not*, as his Honor surmised, for the purpose of enabling the jury to

indulge in—er—preliminary choral exercise! He might, indeed, say "alas not!" They were the damning, incontrovertible proofs of the perfidy of the defendant. And they would prove as terrible a warning to him as the fatal characters upon Belshazzar's wall. There was a strong sensation. Hotchkiss turned a sallow green. His lawyers assumed a careless smile.

It was his duty to tell them that this was not one of those ordinary "breach-of-promise" cases which were too often the occasion of ruthless mirth and indecent levity in the courtroom. The jury would find nothing of that here. There were no love-letters with the epithets of endearment, nor those mystic crosses and ciphers which, he had been credibly informed, chastely hid the exchange of those mutual caresses known as "kisses." There was no cruel tearing of the veil from those sacred privacies of the human affection—there was no forensic shouting out of those fond confidences meant only for *one*. But there was, he was shocked to say, a new sacrilegious intrusion. The weak pipings of Cupid were mingled with the chorus of the saints—the sanctity of the temple known as the "meeting-house" was desecrated by proceedings more in keeping with the shrine of Venus—and the inspired writings themselves were used as the medium of amatory and wanton flirtation by the defendant in his sacred capacity as Deacon.

The Colonel artistically paused after this thunderous denunciation. The jury turned eagerly to the leaves of the hymn-books, but the larger gaze of the audience remained fixed upon the speaker and the girl, who sat in rapt admiration of his periods. After the hush, the Colonel continued in a lower and sadder voice: "There are, perhaps, few of us here, gentlemen—with the exception of the defendant—who can arrogate to themselves the title of regular churchgoers, or to whom these humbler functions of the prayer-meeting, the Sunday-school, and the Bible class are habitually familiar. Yet"—more solemnly—"down in your hearts is the deep conviction of our short-comings and failings, and a laudable desire that others at least should profit by the teachings we neglect. Perhaps," he continued, closing his eyes dreamily, "there is not a man here who does not recall the happy days of his boyhood, the rustic village spire, the lessons shared with some artless village maiden, with whom he later sauntered, hand in hand, through the woods, as the simple rhyme rose upon their lips,

Always make it a point to have it a rule
Never to be late at the Sabbath-school."

He would recall the strawberry feasts, the welcome annual picnic, redolent with hunks of gingerbread and sarsaparilla. How would they feel to know that these sacred recollections were now forever profaned in their memory by the knowledge that the defendant was capable of using such occasions to make love to the larger girls and teachers, whilst his artless companions were innocently—the Court will pardon me for introducing what I am credibly informed is the local expression 'doing gooseberry'?" The tremulous flicker of a smile passed over the faces of the listening crowd, and the Colonel slightly winced. But he recovered himself instantly, and continued:

"My client, the only daughter of a widowed mother—who has for years stemmed the varying tides of adversity—in the western precincts of this town—stands before you today invested only in her own innocence. She wears no—er—rich gifts of her faithless admirer—is panoplied in no jewels, rings, nor mementoes of affection such as lovers delight to hang upon the shrine of their affections; hers is not the glory with which Solomon decorated the Queen of Sheba, though the defendant, as I shall show later, clothed her in the less expensive flowers of the king's poetry. No! gentlemen! The defendant exhibited in this affair a certain frugality of—er—pecuniary investment, which I am willing to admit may be commendable in his class. His only gift was characteristic alike of his methods and his economy. There is, I understand, a certain not unimportant feature of religious exercise known as 'taking a collection.' The defendant, on this occasion, by the mute presentation of a tip plate covered with baize, solicited the pecuniary contributions of the faithful. On approaching the plaintiff, however, he himself slipped a love-token upon the plate and pushed it towards her. That love-token was a lozenge—a small disk, I have reason to believe, concocted of peppermint and sugar, bearing upon its reverse surface the simple words, 'I love you!' I have since ascertained that these disks may be bought for five cents a dozen—or at considerably less than one half-cent for the single lozenge. Yes, gentlemen, the words 'I love you!'—the oldest legend of all; the refrain, 'when the morning stars sang

together'—were presented to the plaintiff by a medium so insignificant that there is, happily, no coin in the republic low enough to represent its value.

"I shall prove to you, gentlemen of the jury," said the Colonel, solemnly, drawing a *Bible* from his coat-tail pocket, "that the defendant, for the last twelve months, conducted an amatory correspondence with the plaintiff by means of underlined words of sacred writ and church psalmody, such as 'beloved,' 'precious,' and 'dearest,' occasionally appropriating whole passages which seemed apposite to his tender passion. I shall call your attention to one of them. The defendant, while professing to be a total abstainer—a man who, in my own knowledge, has refused spirituous refreshment as an inordinate weakness of the flesh, with shameless hypocrisy underscores with his pencil the following passage and presents it to the plaintiff. The gentlemen of the jury will find it in the *Song of Solomon*, page 548, chapter II, verse 5." After a pause, in which the rapid rustling of leaves was heard in the jury-box, Colonel Starbottle declaimed in a pleading, stentorian voice, "'Stay me with —er—*flagons*, comfort me with—er—apples—for I am—er—sick of love.' Yes, gentlemen!—yes, you may well turn from those accusing pages and look at the double-faced defendant. He desires—to—er—be —'stayed with flagons'! I am not aware, at present, what kind of liquor is habitually dispensed at these meetings, and for which the defendant so urgently clamored; but it will be my duty before this trial is over to discover it, if I have to summon every barkeeper in this district. For the moment, I will simply call your attention to the *quantity*. It is not a single drink that the defendant asks for—not a glass of light and generous wine, to be shared with his inamorata—but a number of flagons or vessels, each possibly holding a pint measure—*for himself*!"

The smile of the audience had become a laugh. The Judge looked up warningly, when his eye caught the fact that the Colonel had again winced at this mirth. He regarded him seriously. Mr. Hotchkiss's counsel had joined in the laugh affectedly, but Hotchkiss himself was ashy pale. There was also a commotion in the jury-box, a hurried turning over of leaves, and an excited discussion.

"The gentlemen of the jury," said the Judge, with official gravity, "will please keep order and attend only to the speeches of counsel. Any

discussion *here* is irregular and premature—and must be reserved for the jury-room—after they have retired."

The foreman of the jury struggled to his feet. He was a powerful man, with a good-humored face, and, in spite of his unfelicitous nickname of "The Bone-Breaker," had a kindly, simple, but somewhat emotional nature. Nevertheless, it appeared as if he were laboring under some powerful indignation.

"Can we ask a question, Judge?" he said, respectfully, although his voice had the unmistakable Western-American ring in it, as of one who was unconscious that he could be addressing any but his peers.

"Yes," said the Judge, good-humoredly.

"We're finding in this yere piece, out of which the Kernel hes just bin a-quotin', some language that me and my pardners allow hadn't orter to be read out afore a young lady in court—and we want to know of you—ez a fair-minded and impartial man—ef this is the reg'lar kind o' book given to gals and babies down at the meetin'-house."

"The jury will please follow the counsel's speech, without comment," said the Judge, briefly, fully aware that the defendant's counsel would spring to his feet, as he did promptly. "The Court will allow us to explain to the gentlemen that the language they seem to object to has been accepted by the best theologians for the last thousand years as being purely mystic. As I will explain later, those are merely symbols of the Church—"

"Of wot?" interrupted the foreman, in deep scorn.

"Of the Church!"

"We ain't askin' any questions o' *you*—and we ain't takin' any answers," said the foreman, sitting down promptly.

"I must insist," said the Judge, sternly, "that the plaintiff's counsel be allowed to continue his opening without interruption. You" (to defendant's counsel) "will have your opportunity to reply later."

The counsel sank down in his seat with the bitter conviction that the jury was manifestly against him, and the case as good as lost. But his

face was scarcely as disturbed as his client's, who, in great agitation, had begun to argue with him wildly, and was apparently pressing some point against the lawyer's vehement opposition. The Colonel's murky eyes brightened as he still stood erect with his hand thrust in his breast.

"It will be put to you, gentlemen, when the counsel on the other side refrains from mere interruption and confines himself to reply, that my unfortunate client has no action—no remedy at law—because there were no spoken words of endearment. But, gentlemen, it will depend upon *you* to say what are and what are not articulate expressions of love. We all know that among the lower animals, with whom you may possibly be called upon to classify the defendant, there are certain signals more or less harmonious, as the case may be. The ass brays, the horse neighs, the sheep bleats—the feathered denizens of the grove call to their mates in more musical roundelays. These are recognized facts, gentlemen, which you yourselves, as dwellers among nature in this beautiful land, are all cognizant of. They are facts that no one would deny—and we should have a poor opinion of the ass who, at—er—such a supreme moment, would attempt to suggest that his call was unthinking and without significance. But, gentlemen, I shall prove to you that such was the foolish, self-convicting custom of the defendant. With the greatest reluctance, and the—er—greatest pain, I succeeded in wresting from the maidenly modesty of my fair client the innocent confession that the defendant had induced her to correspond with him in these methods. Picture to yourself, gentlemen, the lonely moonlight road beside the widow's humble cottage. It is a beautiful night, sanctified to the affections, and the innocent girl is leaning from her casement. Presently there appears upon the road a slinking, stealthy figure—the defendant, on his way to church. True to the instruction she has received from him, her lips part in the musical utterance" (the Colonel lowered his voice in a faint falsetto, presumably in fond imitation of his fair client), "'Kerree!' Instantly the night became resonant with the impassioned reply" (the Colonel here lifted his voice in stentorian tones), "'Kerrow.' Again, as he passes, rises the soft 'Kerree'; again, as his form is lost in the distance, comes back the deep 'Kerrow.'"

A burst of laughter, long, loud, and irrepressible, struck the whole courtroom, and before the Judge could lift his half-composed face and take

his handkerchief from his mouth, a faint "Kerree" from some unrecognized obscurity of the courtroom was followed by a loud "Kerrow" from some opposite locality. "The sheriff will clear the court," said the Judge, sternly; but alas, as the embarrassed and choking officials rushed hither and thither, a soft "Kerree" from the spectators at the window, *outside* the courthouse, was answered by a loud chorus of "Kerrows" from the opposite windows, filled with onlookers. Again the laughter arose everywhere—even the fair plaintiff herself sat convulsed behind her handkerchief.

The figure of Colonel Starbottle alone remained erect—white and rigid. And then the Judge, looking up, saw what no one else in the court had seen—that the Colonel was sincere and in earnest; that what he had conceived to be the pleader's most perfect acting, and most elaborate irony, were the deep, serious, mirthless *convictions* of a man without the least sense of humor. There was a touch of this respect in the Judge's voice as he said to him, gently, "You may proceed, Colonel Starbottle."

"I thank your Honor," said the Colonel, slowly, "for recognizing and doing all in your power to prevent an interruption that, during my thirty years' experience at the bar, I have never yet been subjected to without the privilege of holding the instigators thereof responsible—*personally* responsible. It is possibly my fault that I have failed, oratorically, to convey to the gentlemen of the jury the full force and significance of the defendant's signals. I am aware that my voice is singularly deficient in producing either the dulcet tones of my fair client or the impassioned vehemence of the defendant's repose. I will," continued the Colonel, with a fatigued but blind fatuity that ignored the hurriedly knit brows and warning eyes of the Judge, "try again. The note uttered by my client" (lowering his voice to the faintest of falsettos) "was 'Kerree'; the response was 'Kerrow'"—and the Colonel's voice fairly shook the dome above him.

Another uproar of laughter followed this apparently audacious repetition, but was interrupted by an unlooked-for incident. The defendant rose abruptly, and tearing himself away from the withholding hand and pleading protestations of his counsel, absolutely fled from the courtroom, his appearance outside being recognized by a prolonged "Kerrow" from the bystanders, which again and again followed him in the distance. In the momentary silence which followed, the Colonel's voice was heard saying,

"We rest here, your Honor," and he sat down. No less white, but more agitated, was the face of the defendant's counsel, who instantly rose.

"For some unexplained reason, your Honor, my client desires to suspend further proceedings, with a view to effect a peaceable compromise with the plaintiff. As he is a man of wealth and position, he is able and willing to pay liberally for that privilege. While I, as his counsel, am still convinced of his legal irresponsibility, as he has chosen, however, to publicly abandon his rights here, I can only ask your Honor's permission to suspend further proceedings until I can confer with Colonel Starbottle."

"As far as I can follow the pleadings," said the Judge, gravely, "the case seems to be hardly one for litigation, and I approve of the defendant's course, while I strongly urge the plaintiff to accept it."

Colonel Starbottle bent over his fair client. Presently he rose, unchanged in look or demeanor. "I yield, your Honor, to the wishes of my client, and—er—lady. We accept."

Before the court adjourned that day it was known throughout the town that Adoniram K. Hotchkiss had compromised the suit for four thousand dollars and costs.

Colonel Starbottle had so far recovered his equanimity as to strut jauntily towards his office, where he was to meet his fair client. He was surprised, however, to find her already there, and in company with a somewhat sheepish-looking young man—a stranger. If the Colonel had any disappointment in meeting a third party to the interview, his old-fashioned courtesy did not permit him to show it. He bowed graciously, and politely motioned them each to a seat.

"I reckoned I'd bring Hiram round with me," said the young lady, lifting her searching eyes, after a pause, to the Colonel's, "though he was awful shy, and allowed that you didn't know him from Adam—or even suspected his existence. But I said, 'That's just where you slip up, Hiram; a pow'ful man like the Colonel knows everything—and I've seen it in his eye.' Lordy!" she continued, with a laugh, leaning forward over her parasol, as her eyes again sought the Colonel's, "don't you remember when you asked me if I loved that old Hotchkiss, and I told you 'That's tellin',' and you

looked at me, Lordy! I knew *then* you suspected there was a Hiram *somewhere*—as good as if I'd told you. Now, you, jest get up, Hiram, and give the Colonel a good handshake. For if it wasn't for *him* and *his* searchin' ways, and *his* awful power of language, I wouldn't hev got that four thousand dollars out o' that flirty fool Hotchkiss—enough to buy a farm, so as you and me could get married! That's what you owe to *him*. Don't stand there like a stuck fool starin' at him. He won't eat you—though he's killed many a better man. Come, have *I* got to do *all* the kissin'!"

It is of record that the Colonel bowed so courteously and so profoundly that he managed not merely to evade the proffered hand of the shy Hiram, but to only lightly touch the franker and more impulsive fingertips of the gentle Zaidee. "I—er—offer my sincerest congratulations—though I think you—er—overestimate—my—er—powers of penetration. Unfortunately, a pressing engagement, which may oblige me also to leave town to-night, forbids my saying more. I have—er—left the—er—business settlement of this—er—case in the hands of the lawyers who do my office-work, and who will show you every attention. And now let me wish you a very good afternoon."

Nevertheless, the Colonel returned to his private room, and it was nearly twilight when the faithful Jim entered, to find him sitting meditatively before his desk. "'Fo' God! Kernel—I hope dey ain't nuffin de matter, but you's lookin' mighty solemn! I ain't seen you look dat way, Kernel, since de day pooh Marse Stryker was fetched home shot froo de head."

"Hand me down the whiskey, Jim," said the Colonel, rising slowly.

The negro flew to the closet joyfully, and brought out the bottle. The Colonel poured out a glass of the spirit and drank it with his old deliberation.

"You're quite right, Jim," he said, putting down his glass, "but I'm—er—getting old—and—somehow—I am missing poor Stryker damnably!"

Treating a Case Actively

I WAS once sent for, in great haste, to attend a gentleman of respectability, whose wife, a lady of intelligence and refinement, had discovered him in his room lying senseless upon the floor. On arriving at the house, I found Mrs. H— in great distress of mind.

"What is the matter with Mr. H—?" I asked, on meeting his lady, who was in tears and looking the picture of distress.

"I'm afraid it is apoplexy," she replied. "I found him lying upon the floor, where he had, to all appearance, fallen suddenly from his chair. His face is purple, and though he breathes, it is with great difficulty."

I went up to see my patient. He had been lifted from the floor, and was now lying upon the bed. Sure enough, his face was purple and his breathing laboured, but somehow the symptoms did not indicate apoplexy. Every vein in his head and face was turgid, and he lay perfectly stupid, but still I saw no clear indications of an actual or approaching congestion of the brain.

"Hadn't he better be bled, doctor?" asked the anxious wife.

"I don't know that it is necessary," I replied. "I think, if we let him alone, it will pass off in the course of a few hours."

"A few hours! He may die in half an hour."

"I don't think the case is so dangerous, madam."

"Apoplexy not dangerous?"

"I hardly think it apoplexy," I replied.

"Pray, what do you think it is, doctor?"

Mrs. H— looked anxiously into my face.

I delicately hinted that he might, possibly, have been drinking too much brandy; but to this she positively and almost indignantly objected.

"No, doctor; *I* ought to know about that," she said. "Depend upon it, the disease is more deeply seated. I am sure he had better be bled. Won't you bleed him, doctor? A few ounces of blood taken from his arm may give life to the now stagnant circulation of the blood in his veins."

Thus urged, I, after some reflection, ordered a bowl and bandage, and opening a vein, from which the blood flowed freely, relieved him of about eight ounces of his circulating medium. But he still lay as insensible as before, much to the distress of his poor wife.

"Something else must be done, doctor," she urged, seeing that bleeding had accomplished nothing. "If my husband is not quickly relieved, he must die."

By this time, several friends and relatives, who had been sent for, arrived, and urged upon me the adoption of some more active means for restoring the sick man to consciousness. One proposed mustard plasters all over his body; another a blister on the head; another his immersion in hot water. I suggested that it might be well to use a stomach-pump.

"Why, doctor?" asked one of the friends.

"Perhaps he has taken some drug," I replied.

"Impossible, doctor," said the wife. "He has not been from home to-day, and there is no drug of any kind in the house."

"No brandy?" I ventured this suggestion again.

"No, doctor, no spirits of any kind, nor even wine, in the house," returned Mrs. H—, in an offended tone.

I was not the regular family physician, and had been called in to meet the alarming emergency, because my office happened to be nearest to the dwelling of Mr. H—. Feeling my position to be a difficult one, I suggested that the family physician had better be called.

"But the delay, doctor," urged the friends. "No harm will result from it, be assured," I replied.

But my words did not assure them. However, as I was firm in my resolution not to do any thing more for the patient until Dr. S— came, they

had to submit. I wished to make a call of importance in the neighbourhood, and proposed going, to be back by the time Dr. S— arrived; but the friends of the sick man would not suffer me to leave the room.

When Dr. S— came, we conversed aside for a few minutes, and I gave him my views of the case, and stated what I had done and why I had done it. We then proceeded to the bedside of our patient; there were still no signs of approaching consciousness.

"Don't you think his head ought to be shaved and blistered?" asked the wife, anxiously. Dr. S— thought a moment, and then said—"Yes, by all means. Send for a barber; and also for a fresh fly-blister, four inches by nine."

I looked into the face of Dr. S— with surprise; it was perfectly grave and earnest. I hinted to him my doubt of the good that mode of treatment would do; but he spoke confidently of the result, and said that it would not only cure the disease, but, he believed, take away the predisposition thereto, with which Mr. H— was affected in a high degree.

The barber came. The head of H— was shaved, and Dr. S— applied the blister with his own hands, which completely covered the scalp from forehead to occiput.

"Let it remain on for two hours, and then make use of the ordinary dressing," said Dr. S—. "If he should not recover during the action of the blister, don't feel uneasy; sensibility will be restored soon after."

I did not call again, but I heard from Dr. S— the result.

After we left, the friends stood anxiously around the bed upon which the sick man lay; but though the blister began to draw, no signs of returning consciousness showed themselves, further than an occasional low moan, or an uneasy tossing of the arms. For full two hours the burning plaster parched the tender skin of H—'s shorn head, and was then removed; it had done good service. Dressings were then applied; repeated and repeated again; but still the sick man lay in a deep stupor.

"It has done no good; hadn't we better send for the doctor?" suggested the wife.

Just then the eyes of H— opened, and he looked with half-stupid surprise from face to face of the anxious group that surrounded the bed.

"What in the mischief's the matter?" he at length said. At the same time, feeling a strange sensation about his head, he placed his hand rather heavily thereon.

"Heavens and earth!" He was now fully in his senses. "Heavens and earth! what ails my head?"

"For mercy's sake, keep quiet," said the wife, the glad tears gushing over her face. "You have been very ill; there, there, now!" And she spoke soothingly. "Don't say a word, but lie very still."

"But my head! What's the matter with my head? It feels as if scalded. Where's my hair? Heavens and earth! Sarah, I don't understand this. And my arm? What's my arm tied up in this way for?"

"Be quiet, my dear husband, and I'll explain it all. Oh, be very quiet; your life depends upon it." Mr. H— sank back upon the pillow from which he had arisen, and closed his eyes to think. He put his hand to his head, and felt it, tenderly, all over, from temple to temple, and from nape to forehead.

"Is it a blister?" he at length asked.

"Yes, dear. You have been very ill; we feared for your life," said Mrs. H—, affectionately; "there have been two physicians in attendance."

H— closed his eyes again; his lips moved. Those nearest were not much edified by the whispered words that issued therefrom. They would have sounded very strangely in a church, or to ears polite and refined. After this, he lay for some time quiet.

"Threatened with apoplexy, I suppose?" he then said, interrogatively.

"Yes, dear," replied his wife. "I found you lying insensible upon the floor, on happening to come into your room. It was most providential that I discovered you when I did, or you would certainly have died."

H— shut his eyes and muttered something, with an air of impatience; but its meaning was not understood. Finding him out of danger, friends and relatives retired, and the sick man was left alone with his family.

"Sarah," he said, "why, in the name of goodness, did you permit the doctors to butcher me in this way? I'm laid up for a week or two, and all for nothing."

"It was to save your life, dear."

"Save the—!"

"H-u-s-h! There! do, for mercy's sake, be quiet; every thing depends upon it."

With a gesture of impatience, H— shut his eyes, teeth, and hands, and lay perfectly still for some minutes. Then he turned his face to the wall, muttering in a low, petulant voice—"Too bad! too bad! too bad!"

I had not erred in my first and my last impressions of H—'s disease, neither had Dr. S— although he used a very extraordinary mode of treatment. The facts of the case were these:

H— had a weakness; he could not taste wine nor strong drink without being tempted into excess. Both himself and friends were mortified and grieved at this; and they, by admonition, and he, by good resolutions, tried to bring about a reform; but to see was to taste, to taste was to fall. At last, his friends urged him to shut himself up at home for a certain time, and see if total abstinence would not give him strength. He got on pretty well for a few days, particularly so, as his coachman kept a well-filled bottle for him in the carriage-house, to which he not unfrequently resorted; but a too ardent devotion to this bottle brought on the supposed apoplexy.

Dr. S— was right in his mode of treating the disease after all, and did not err in supposing that it would reach the predisposition. The cure was effectual. H— kept quiet on the subject, and bore his shaved head upon his shoulders with as much philosophy as he could muster. A wig, after the sores made by the blister had disappeared, concealed the barber's work until

his own hair grew again. He never ventured upon wine or brandy again for fear of apoplexy.

When the truth leaked out, as leak out such things always will, the friends of H— had many a hearty laugh; but they wisely concealed from the object of their merriment the fact that they knew any thing more than appeared of the cause of his supposed illness.

The Sacrifice

CHAPTER I

It had been a hot day at the Law Courts, but a faint breeze had sprung up with the later hours, blowing softly over the river. It caught the tassel of the blind by which Field sat and tapped it against the window-frame, at first gently like a child at play, then with gathering force and insistence till at last he looked up with a frown and rose to fasten it back.

It was growing late. The rose of the afterglow lay upon the water, tipping the silvery ripples with soft colour. It was a magic night. But the wonder of it did not apparently reach him. A table littered with papers stood in front of him bearing a portable electric lamp. He was obviously too engrossed to think of exterior things.

For a space he sat again in silence by the open window, only the faint rustling of the lace curtain being audible. His somewhat hard, clean-shaven face was bent over his work with rigid concentration. His eyelids scarcely stirred.

Then again there came a tapping, this time at the door. The frown returned to his face. He looked up.

"Well?"

The door opened. A small, sharp-faced boy poked in his head. "A lady to see you, sir."

"What?" said Field. His frown deepened. "I can't see any one. I told you so."

"Says she won't go away till she's seen you, sir," returned the boy glibly. "Can't get her to budge, sir."

"Oh, tell her—" said Field, and stopped as if arrested by a sudden thought. "Who is it?" he asked.

A grin so brief that it might have been a mere twitch of the features passed over the boy's face.

"Wouldn't give no name, sir. But she's a nob of some sort," he said. "Got a shiny satin dress on under her cloak."

Field's eyes went for a moment to his littered papers. Then he picked up a newspaper from a chair and threw it over them.

"Show her in!" he said briefly.

He got up with the words, and stood with his back to the window, watching the half-open door.

There came a slight rustle in the passage outside. The small boy reappeared and threw the door wide with a flourish. A woman in a dark cloak and hat with a thick veil over her face entered.

The door closed behind her. Field stood motionless. She advanced with slight hesitation.

"I hope you will forgive me," she said, "for intruding upon you."

Her voice was rich and deep. It held a throb of nervousness. Field came deliberately forward.

"I presume I can be of use to you," he said.

His tone was dry. There was scant encouragement about him as he drew forward a chair.

She hesitated momentarily before accepting it, but finally sat down with a gesture that seemed to indicate physical weakness of some sort.

"Yes, I want your help," she said.

Field said nothing. His face was the face of the trained man of law. It expressed naught beyond a steady, impersonal attention.

He drew up another chair and seated himself facing her.

She looked at him through her veil for several seconds in silence. Finally, with manifest effort, she spoke.

"It was so good of you to admit me—especially not knowing who I was. You recognise me now, of course? I am Lady Violet Calcott."

"I should recognise you more easily," he said in his emotionless voice, "if you would be good enough to put up your veil."

His tone was perfectly quiet and courteous, yet she made a rapid movement to comply, as if he had definitely required it of her. She threw back the obscuring veil and showed him the face of one of the most beautiful women in London.

There was an instant's pause before he said.

"Yes, I recognise you, of course. And—you wanted to consult me?"

"No!" She leaned forward in her chair with white hands clasped. "I wanted to beg you to tell me—why you have refused to undertake Burleigh Wentworth's defence!"

She spoke with a breathless intensity. Her wonderful eyes were lifted to his—eyes that had dazzled half London, but Field only looked down into them as he might have regarded one of his legal documents. A slight, peculiar smile just touched his lips as he made reply.

"I have no objection to telling you, Lady Violet. He is guilty. That is why."

"Ah!" It was a sound like the snapped string of an instrument. Her fingers gripped each other. "So you think that too! Indeed—indeed, you are wrong! But—is that your only reason?"

"Isn't it a sufficient one?" he said.

Her fingers writhed and strained against each other. "Do you mean that it is—against your principles?" she said.

"To defend a guilty man?" questioned the barrister slowly.

She nodded two or three times as if for the moment utterance were beyond her.

Field's eyes had not stirred from her face, yet still they had that legal look as if he searched for some hidden information.

"No," he said finally. "It is not entirely a matter of principle. As you are aware, I have achieved a certain reputation. And I value it."

She made a quick movement that was almost convulsive.

"But you would not injure your reputation. You would only enhance it," she said, speaking very rapidly as if some obstruction to speech had very suddenly been removed. "You are practically on the top of the wave. You would succeed where another man would fail. And indeed—oh, indeed he is innocent! He must be innocent! Things look black against him. But he can be saved somehow. And you could save him—if you would. Think what the awful disgrace would mean to him—if he were convicted! And he doesn't deserve it. I assure you he doesn't deserve it. Ah, how shall I persuade you of that?" Her voice quivered upon a note of despair. "Surely you are human! There must be some means of moving you. You can't want to see an innocent man go under!"

The beautiful eyes were blurred with tears as she looked at him. She caught back a piteous sob. The cloak had fallen from about her shoulders. They gleamed with an exquisite whiteness.

The man's look still rested upon her with unflickering directness. Again that peculiar smile hovered about his grim mouth.

"Yes, I am human," he said, after a pause. "I do not esteem myself as above temptation. As you probably know, I am a self-made man, of very ordinary extraction. But—I do not feel tempted to take up Burleigh Wentworth's defence. I am sorry if that fact should cause you any disappointment. I do not see why it should. There are plenty of other men—abler than I am—who would, I am sure, be charmed to oblige Lady Violet Calcott or any of her friends."

"That is not so," she broke in rapidly. "You know that is not so. You know that your genius has placed you in what is really a unique position. Your name in itself is almost a mascot. You know quite well that you carry all before you with your eloquence. If—if you couldn't get him acquitted, you could get him lenient treatment. You could save his life from utter ruin."

She clasped and unclasped her hands in nervous excitement. Her face was piteous in its strain and pathos.

And still Field looked unmoved upon her distress.

"I am afraid I can't help you," he said. "My eloquence would need a very strong incentive in such a case as this to balance my lack of sympathy."

"What do you mean by—incentive?" she said, her voice very low. "I will do anything—anything in my power—to induce you to change your mind. I never lost hope until—I heard you had refused to defend him. Surely—surely—there is some means of persuading you left!"

For the first time his smile was openly cynical.

"Don't offer me money, please!" he said.

She flushed vividly, hotly.

"Mr. Field! I shouldn't dream of it!"

"No?" he said. "But it was more than a dream with you when you first entered this room."

She dropped her eyes from his.

"I—didn't—realise—" she said in confusion.

He bent forward slightly. It was an attitude well known at the Law Courts. "Didn't realise—" he repeated in his quiet, insistent fashion.

She met his look again—against her will.

"I didn't realise what sort of man I had to deal with," she said.

"Ah!" said Field. "And now?"

She shrank a little. There was something intolerably keen in his calm utterance.

"I didn't do it," she said rather breathlessly. "Please remember that!"

"I do," he said.

But yet his look racked her. She threw out her hands with a sudden, desperate gesture and rose.

"Oh, are you quite without feeling? What can I appeal to? Does position mean a great deal to you? If so, my brother is very influential, and I have influential friends. I will do anything—anything in my power. Tell me what—incentive you want!"

Field rose also. They stood face to face—the self-made man and the girl who could trace her descent from a Norman baron. He was broad-built, grim, determined. She was slender, pale, and proud.

For a moment he did not speak. Then, as her eyes questioned him, he turned suddenly to a mirror over the mantelpiece behind him and showed her herself in her unveiled beauty.

"Lady Violet," he said, and his speech had a steely, cutting quality, "you came into this room to bribe me to defend a man whom I believe to be a criminal from the consequences of his crime. And when you found I was not to be so easily bought as you imagined, you asked me if I were human. I replied to you that I was human, and not above temptation. Since then you have been trying—very hard—to find a means to tempt me. But—so far—you have overlooked the most obvious means of all. You have told me twice over that you will do anything in your power. Do you mean—literally—that?"

He was addressing the face in the glass, and still his look was almost brutally emotionless. It seemed to measure, to appraise. She met it for a few seconds, and then in spite of herself she flinched.

"Will you tell me what you mean?" she said in a low voice.

He turned round to her again.

"Why did you come here yourself?" he said. "And at night?"

She was trembling.

"I had to come myself—as soon as I knew. I hoped to persuade you."

"You thought," he said mercilessly, "that, however I might treat others, I could never resist you."

"I hoped—to persuade you," she said again.

"By—tempting—me?" he said slowly.

She gave a great start. "Mr. Field—"

He put out a quiet hand, and laid it upon her bare arm.

"Wait a moment, please! As I said before, I am not above temptation—being human. You take a very personal interest in Burleigh Wentworth, I think?"

She met his look with quivering eyelids.

"Yes," she said.

"Are you engaged to him?" he pursued.

She winced in spite of herself.

"No."

He raised his brows.

"You have refused him, then?"

Her face was burning.

"He hasn't proposed to me—yet," she said. "Perhaps he never will."

"I see." His manner was relentless, his hold compelling. "I will defend Burleigh Wentworth," he said, "upon one condition."

"What is that?" she whispered.

"That you marry me," said Percival Field with his steady eyes upon her face.

She was trembling from head to foot.

"You—you—have never seen me before to-day," she said.

"Yes, I have seen you," he said, "several times. I have known your face and figure by heart for a very long while. I haven't had the time to seek you out. It seems to have been decreed that you should do that part."

Was there cynicism in his voice? It seemed so. Yet his eyes never left her. They held her by some electric attraction which she was powerless to break.

She looked at him, white to the lips.

"Are you—in—earnest?" she asked at last.

Again for an instant she saw his faint smile.

"Don't you know the signs yet?" he said. "Surely you have had ample opportunity to learn them!"

A tinge of colour crept beneath her pallor.

"No one ever proposed to me—like this before," she said.

His hand was still upon her arm. It closed with a slow, remorseless pressure as he made quiet reply to her previous question.

"Yes. I am in earnest."

She flinched at last from the gaze of those merciless eyes.

"You ask the impossible," she said.

"Then it is all the simpler for you to refuse," he rejoined.

Her eyes were upon the hand that held her. Did he know that its grasp had almost become a grip? It was by that, and that alone, that she was made aware of something human—or was it something bestial—behind that legal mask?

Suddenly she straightened herself and faced him. It cost her all the strength she had.

"Mr. Field," she said, and though her voice shook she spoke with resolution, "if I were to consent to this—extraordinary suggestion; if I married you—you would not ask—or expect—more than that?"

"If you consent to marry me," he said, "it will be without conditions."

"Then I cannot consent," she said. "Please let me go!"

He released her instantly, and, turning, picked up her cloak.

But she moved away to the window and stood there with her back to him, gazing down upon the quiet river. Its pearly stillness was like a dream. The rush and roar of London's many wheels had died to a monotone.

The man waited behind her in silence. She had released the blind-cord, and was plucking at it mechanically, with fingers that trembled.

Suddenly the blast of a siren from a vessel in mid-stream shattered the stillness. The girl at the window quivered from head to foot as if it had pierced her. And then with a sharp movement she turned.

"Mr. Field!" she said, and stopped.

He waited with absolute composure.

She made a small but desperate gesture—the gesture of a creature trapped and helpless.

"I—will do it!" she said in a voice that was barely audible. "But if—if you ever come—to repent—don't blame me!"

"I shall not repent," he said.

She passed on rapidly.

"And—you will do your best—to save—Burleigh Wentworth?"

"I will save him," said Field.

She paused a moment; then moved towards him, as if compelled against her will.

He put the cloak around her shoulders, and then, as she fumbled with it uncertainly, he fastened it himself.

"Your veil?" he said.

She made a blind movement. Her self-control was nearly gone. With absolute steadiness he drew it down over her face.

"Have you a conveyance waiting?" he asked.

"Yes," she whispered.

He turned to the door. He was in the act of opening it when she stayed him.

"One moment!" she said.

He stopped at once, standing before her with his level eyes looking straight at her.

She spoke hurriedly behind her veil.

"Promise me, you will never—never let him know—of this!"

He made a grave bow, his eyes unchangeably upon her.

"Certainly," he said.

She made an involuntary movement; her hands clenched. She stood as if she were about to make some further appeal. But he opened the door and held it for her, and such was the finality of his action that she was obliged to pass out.

He followed her into the lift and took her down in unbroken silence.

A taxi awaited her. He escorted her to it.

"Good night!" he said then.

She hesitated an instant. Then, without speaking, she gave him her hand. For a moment his fingers grasped hers.

"You may depend upon me," he said.

She slipped free from his hold. "Thank you," she said, her voice very low.

A few seconds later Field sat again at his table by the window. The wind was blowing in from the river in rising gusts. The blind-tassel tapped

and tapped, now here, now there, like a trapped creature seeking frantically for escape. For a space he sat quite motionless, gazing before him as though unaware of his surroundings. Then very suddenly but very quietly he reached out and caught the swaying thing. A moment he held it, then pulled it to him and, taking a penknife from the table, grimly, deliberately, he severed the cord.

The tassel lay in his hand, a silken thing, slightly frayed, as if convulsive fingers had torn it. He sat for a while and looked at it. Then, with that strange smile of his, he laid it away in a drawer.

CHAPTER II

The trial of Burleigh Wentworth for forgery was one of the sensations of the season. A fashionable crowd went day after day to the stifling Court to watch its progress. The man himself, nonchalant, debonair, bore himself with the instinctive courage of his race, though whether his bearing would have been as confident had Percival Field not been at his back was a question asked by a good many. He was one of the best-known figures in society, a general favourite in sporting circles, and universally looked upon with approval if not admiration wherever he went. He had the knack of popularity. He came of an old family, and his rumoured engagement to Lady Violet Calcott had surprised no one. Lord Culverleigh, her brother, was known to be his intimate friend, and the rumour had come already to be regarded as an accomplished fact when, like a thunder-bolt, had come Wentworth's arraignment for forgery.

It had set all London talking. The evidence against him was far-reaching and overwhelming. After the first shock no one believed him innocent. The result of the trial was looked upon before its commencement as a foregone conclusion until it became known that Percival Field, the rising man of the day, had undertaken his defence, and then like the swing of a weather cock public opinion veered. If Field defended him, there must be some very strong point in his favour, men argued. Field was not the sort to touch anything of a doubtful nature.

The trial lasted for nearly a week. During that time Lady Violet went day after day to the Court and sat with her veil down all through the burning hours. People looked at her curiously, questioning if there really had been any definite understanding between the two. Did she really care for the man, or was it mere curiosity that drew her? No one knew with any certainty. She wrapped herself in her reserve like an all-enveloping garment, and even those who regarded themselves as her nearest friends knew naught of what she carried in her soul.

All through the trial she sat in utter immobility, sphinx-like, unapproachable, yet listening with tense attention to all that passed. Field's handling of the case was a marvel of legal ingenuity. There were many who were attracted to the trial by that alone. He had made his mark, and whatever he said carried weight. When he came at last to make his speech for the defence, men and women listened with bated breath. It was one of the greatest speeches that the Criminal Court had ever heard.

He flung into it the whole weight of his personality. He grappled like a giant with the rooted obstacles that strewed his path, flinging them hither and thither by sheer force of will. His scorching eloquence blasted every opposing power, consumed every tangle of adverse evidence. It was as if he fought a pitched battle for himself alone. He wrestled for the mastery rather than appealed for sympathy.

And he won his cause. His scathing attacks, his magnetism, his ruthless insistence left an indelible mark upon the minds of the jury—such a mark as no subsequent comments from the judge could efface or even moderate. The verdict returned was unanimous in spite of a by no means favourable summing-up. The prisoner was Not Guilty.

At the pronouncement of the verdict there went up a shout of applause such as that Court had seldom heard. The prisoner, rather white but still affecting sublime self-assurance, accepted it with a smile as a tribute to himself. But it was not really directed towards him. It was for the man who had defended him, the man who sat at the table below the dock and turned over a sheaf of papers with a faint, cynical smile at the corners of his thin lips. This man, they said, had done the impossible. He had dragged the prisoner out of his morass by sheer titanic effort. Obviously

Percival Field had believed firmly in the innocence of the man he had defended, or he had not thus triumphantly vindicated him.

The crowd, staring at him, wondered how the victory affected him. It had certainly enhanced his reputation. It had drawn from him such a display of genius as had amazed even his colleagues. Did he feel elated at all over his success? Was he spent by that stupendous effort? No one knew?

Now that it was over, he looked utterly indifferent. He had fought and conquered, but it seemed already as if his attention were turning elsewhere.

The crowd began to stream out. The day was hot and the crush had been very great. On one of the benches occupied by the public a woman had fainted. They carried her out into the corridor and there gradually she revived. A little later she went home alone in a taxi with her veil closely drawn down over her face.

CHAPTER III

The season was drawing to a close when the announcement of Lady Violet Calcott's engagement to Percival Field took the world by storm.

It very greatly astonished Burleigh Wentworth, who after his acquittal had drifted down to Cowes for rest and refreshment before the advent of the crowd. He had not seen Lady Violet before his departure, she having gone out of town for a few days immediately after the trial. But he took the very next train back to London as soon as he had seen the announcement, to find her.

It was late in the evening when he arrived, but this fact did not daunt him. He had always been accustomed to having his own way, and he had a rooted belief, which the result of his trial had not tended to lessen, in his own lucky star. He had dined on the train and he merely waited to change before he went straight to Lord Culverleigh's house.

He found there was a dinner-party in progress. Lady Culverleigh, Violet's sister-in-law, was an indefatigable hostess. She had the reputation for being one of the hardest-working women in the West End.

The notes of a song reached Wentworth as he went towards the drawing-room. Lady Violet was singing. Her voice was rich and low. He stood outside the half-open door to listen.

He did not know that he was visible to any one inside the room, but a man sitting near the door became suddenly aware of his presence and got up before the song was ended. Wentworth in the act of stepping back to let him pass stopped short abruptly. It was Percival Field.

They faced each other for a second or two in silence. Then Field's hand came quietly forth and grasped the other man's shoulder, turning him about.

"I should like a word with you," he said.

They descended the stairs together, Burleigh Wentworth leading the way.

Down in the vestibule they faced each other again. There was antagonism in the atmosphere though it was not visible upon either man's countenance, and each ignored it as it were instinctively.

"Hullo!" said Wentworth, and offered his hand. "I'm pleased to meet you here."

Field took the hand after a scarcely perceptible pause. His smile was openly cynical.

"Very kind of you," he said. "I am somewhat out of my element, I admit. We are celebrating our engagement."

He looked full at Wentworth as he said it with that direct, unflickering gaze of his.

Wentworth did not meet the look quite so fully, but he faced the situation without a sign of discomfiture.

"You are engaged to Lady Violet?" he said. "I saw the announcement. I congratulate you."

"Thanks," said Field.

"Rather sudden, isn't it?" said Wentworth, with a curious glance.

Field's smile still lingered.

"Oh, not really. We have kept it to ourselves, that's all. The wedding is fixed for the week after next—for the convenience of Lady Culverleigh, who wants to get out of town."

"By Jove! It is quick work!" said Wentworth.

There were beads of perspiration on his forehead, but the night was warm. He held himself erect as one defying Fate. So had he held himself throughout his trial; Field recognised the attitude.

The song upstairs had ended. They heard the buzz of appreciation that succeeded it. Field turned with the air of a man who had said his say.

"I don't believe in long engagements myself," he said. "They must be a weariness to the flesh."

He began to mount the stairs again, and Wentworth followed him in silence.

At the drawing-room door Field paused and they entered together. It was almost Wentworth's first appearance since his trial. There was a moment or two of dead silence as he sauntered forward with Field. Then, with a little laugh to cover an instant's embarrassment, Lady Culverleigh came forward. She shook hands with Wentworth and asked where he had been in retreat.

Violet came forward from the piano very pale but quite composed, and shook hands also. Several people present followed suit, and soon there was a little crowd gathered round him, and Burleigh Wentworth was again the popular centre of attraction.

Percival Field kept in the background; it was not his way to assert himself in society. But he remained until Wentworth and the last guest had

departed. And then very quietly but with indisputable insistence he drew Lady Violet away into the conservatory.

She was looking white and tired, but she held herself with a proud aloofness in his presence. While admitting his claim upon her, she yet did not voluntarily yield him an inch.

"Did you wish to speak to me?" she asked.

He stood a moment or two in silence before replying; then:

"Only to give you this," he said, and held out to her a small packet wrapped in tissue paper on the palm of his hand.

She took it unwillingly.

"The badge of servitude?" she said.

"I should like to know if it fits," said Field quietly, as if she had not spoken.

She opened the packet and disclosed not the orthodox diamond ring she had expected, but a ring containing a single sapphire very deep in hue, exquisitely cut. She looked at him over it, her look a question.

"Will you put it on?" he said.

She hesitated an instant, then with a tightening of the lips she slipped it on to her left hand.

"Is it too easy?" he said.

She looked at him again.

"No; it is not easy at all."

He took her hand and looked at it. His touch was cool and strong. He slipped the ring up and down upon her finger, testing it. It was as if he waited for something.

She endured his action for a few seconds, then with a deliberate movement she took her hand away.

"Thank you very much," she said conventionally. "I wonder what made you think of a sapphire."

"You like sapphires?" he questioned.

"Of course," she returned. Her tone was resolutely indifferent, yet something in his look made her avert her eyes abruptly. She turned them upon the ring. "Why did you choose a sapphire?" she said.

If she expected some compliment in reply she was disappointed. He stood in silence.

Half-startled she glanced at him. In the same moment he held out his hand to her with a formal gesture of leave-taking.

"I will tell you another time," he said. "Good night!"

She gave him her hand, but he scarcely held it. The next instant, with a brief bow, he had turned and left her.

CHAPTER IV

Burleigh Wentworth looked around him with a frown of discontent.

He ought to have been in good spirits. Life on the moors suited him. The shooting was excellent, the hospitality beyond reproach. But yet he was not satisfied. People had wholly ceased to eye him askance. He had come himself to look back upon his trial as a mere escapade. It had been an unpleasant experience. He had been a fool to run such a risk. But it was over, and he had come out with flying colours, thanks to Percival Field's genius. A baffling, unapproachable sort of man—Field! The affair of his marriage was still a marvel to Wentworth. He had a strong suspicion that there was more in the conquest than met the eye, but he knew he would never find out from Field.

Violet was getting enigmatical too, but he couldn't stand that. He would put a stop to it. She might be a married woman, but she needn't imagine she was going to keep him at a distance.

She and her husband had joined the house-party of which he was a member the day before. It was the end of their honeymoon, and they were returning to town after their sojourn on the moors. He grimaced to himself at the thought. How would Violet like town in September? He had asked her that question the previous night, but she had not deigned to hear. Decidedly, Violet was becoming interesting. He would have to penetrate that reserve of hers.

He wondered why she was not carrying a gun. She had always been such an ardent sportswoman. He would ask her that also presently. In fact, he felt inclined to go back and ask her now. He was not greatly enjoying himself. It was growing late, and it had begun to drizzle.

His inclination became the more insistent, the more he thought of it. Yes, he would go. He was intimate enough with his host to do as he liked without explanation. And he and Violet had always been such pals. Besides, the thought of sitting with her in the firelight while her husband squelched about in the rain was one that appealed to him. He had no liking for Field, however deeply he might be in his debt. That latent antagonism between them was perpetually making itself felt. He hated the man for the very ability by which he himself had been saved. He hated his calm superiority. Above all, he hated him for marrying Violet. It seemed that he had only to stretch out his hand for whatever he wanted. Still, he hadn't got everything now, Wentworth said to himself, as he strode impatiently back over the moor. Possibly, as time went on, he might even come to realise that what he had was not worth very much.

He reached and entered the old grey house well ahead of any of the other sportsmen. He was determined to find Violet somehow, and he made instant enquiry for her of one of the servants.

The reply served in some measure to soothe his chafing mood. Her ladyship had gone up into the turret some little time back, and was believed to be on the roof.

Without delay he followed her. The air blew chill down the stone staircase as he mounted it. He would have preferred sitting downstairs with her over the fire. But at least interruptions were less probable in this quarter.

There was a battlemented walk at the top of the tower, and here he found her, with a wrap thrown over her head, gazing out through one of the deep embrasures over the misty country to a line of hills in the far distance. The view was magnificent, lighted here and there by sunshine striking through scudding cloud-drifts. And a splendid rainbow spanned it like a multi-coloured frame.

She did not hear him approaching. He wondered why, till he was so close that he could see her face, and then very swiftly she turned upon him and he saw that she was crying.

"My dear girl!" he exclaimed.

She drew back sharply. It was impossible to conceal her distress all in a moment. She moved aside, battling with herself.

He came close to her. "Violet!" he said.

"Don't!" she said, in a choked whisper.

He slipped an arm about her, gently overcoming her resistance. "I say—what's the matter? What's troubling you?"

He had never held her so before. Always till that moment she had maintained a delicate reserve in his presence, a barrier which he had never managed to overcome. He had even wondered sometimes if she were afraid of him. But now in her hour of weakness she suffered him, albeit under protest.

"Oh, go away!" she whispered. "Please—you must!"

But Wentworth had no thought of yielding his advantage. He pressed her to him.

"Violet, I say! You're miserable! I knew you were the first moment I saw you. And I can't stand it. You must let me help. Don't anyhow try to keep me outside!"

"You can't help," she murmured, with her face averted. "At least—only by going away."

But he held her still. "That's rot, you know. I'm not going. What is it? Tell me! Is he a brute to you?"

She made a more determined effort to disengage herself. "Whatever he is, I've got to put up with him. So it's no good talking about it."

"Oh, but look here!" protested Wentworth. "You and I are such old friends. I used to think you cared for me a little. Violet, I say, what induced you to marry that outsider?"

She was silent, not looking at him.

"You were always so proud," he went on. "I never thought in the old days that you would capitulate to a bounder like that. Why, you might have had that Bohemian prince if you'd wanted him."

"I didn't want him!" She spoke with sudden vehemence, as if stung into speech. "I'm not the sort of snob-woman who barter herself for a title!"

"No?" said Wentworth, looking at her curiously. "But what did you barter yourself for, I wonder?"

She flinched, and dropped back into silence.

"Won't you tell me?" he said.

"No." She spoke almost under her breath. He relinquished the matter with the air of a man who has gained his point. "Do you know," he said, in a different tone, "if it hadn't been for that fiendish trial, I'd have been in the same race with Field, and I believe I'd have made better running, too?"

"Ah!" she said.

It was almost a gasp of pain. He stopped deliberately and looked into her face.

"Violet!" he said.

She trembled at his tone and thrust out a protesting hand. "Ah, what is the use?" she cried. "Do you—do you want to break my heart?"

Her voice failed. For the first time her eyes met his fully.

There followed an interval of overwhelming stillness in which neither of them drew a breath. Then, with an odd sound that might have been a laugh strangled at birth. Burleigh Wentworth gathered her to his heart and held her there.

"No!" he said. "No! I want to make you—the happiest woman in the world!"

"Too late! Too late!" she whispered.

But he stopped the words upon her lips, passionately, irresistibly, with his own.

"You are mine!" he swore, with his eyes on hers. "You are mine! No man on earth shall ever take you from me again!"

CHAPTER V

Violet was in her room ready dressed for dinner that evening, when there came a knock upon her door. She was seated at a writing-table in a corner scribbling a note, but she covered it up quickly at the sound.

"Come in!" she said.

She rose as her husband entered. He also was ready dressed. He came up to her in his quiet, direct fashion, looking at her with those steady eyes that saw so much and revealed so little.

"I just came in to say," he said, "that I am sorry to cut your pleasure short, but I find we must return to town to-morrow."

She started at the information. "To-morrow!" she echoed. "Why?"

"I find it necessary," he said.

She looked at him. Her heart was beating very fast. "Percival, why?" she said again.

He raised his eyebrows slightly. "It would be rather difficult for me to explain."

"Do you mean you have to go on business?" she said.

He smiled a little. "Yes, on business."

She turned to the fire with a shiver. There was something in the atmosphere, although the room was warm, that made her cold from head to foot. With her back to him she spoke again:

"Is there any reason why I should go too?"

He came and joined her before the fire. "Yes; one," he said.

She threw him a nervous glance. "And that?"

"You are my wife," said Field quietly.

Again that shiver caught her. She put out a hand to steady herself against the mantelpiece. When she spoke again, it was with a great effort.

"Wives are sometimes allowed a holiday away from their husbands."

Field said nothing whatever. He only looked at her with unvarying attention.

She turned at last in desperation and faced him. "Percival! Why do you look at me like that?"

He turned from her instantly, without replying. "May I write a note here?" he said, and went towards the writing-table. "My pen has run dry."

She made a movement that almost expressed panic. She was at the table before he reached it. "Ah, wait a minute! Let me clear my things out of your way first!"

She began to gather up the open blotter that lay there with feverish haste. A sheet of paper flew out from her nervous hands and fluttered to the floor at Field's feet. He stooped and picked it up.

She uttered a gasp and turned as white as the dress she wore. "That is mine!" she panted.

He gave it to her with grave courtesy. "I am afraid I am disturbing you," he said. "I can wait while you finish."

But she crumpled the paper in her hand. She was trembling so much that she could hardly stand.

"It—doesn't matter," she said almost inaudibly.

He stood for a second or two in silence, then seated himself at the writing-table and took up a pen.

In the stillness that followed she moved away to the fire and stood before it. Field wrote steadily without turning his head. She stooped after a moment and dropped the crumpled paper into the blaze. Then she sat down, her hands tightly clasped about her knees, and waited.

Field's quiet voice broke the stillness at length. "If you are writing letters of your own, perhaps I may leave this one in your charge."

She looked round with a start. He had turned in his chair. Their eyes met across the room.

"May I?" he said.

She nodded, finding her voice with an effort. "Yes—of course."

He got up, and as he did so the great dinner-gong sounded through the house. He came to her side. She rose quickly at his approach, moving almost apprehensively.

"Shall we go down?" she said.

He put out a hand and linked it in her arm. She shrank at his touch, but she endured it. She even, after a moment, seemed to be in a measure steadied by it. She stood motionless for a few seconds, and during those seconds his fingers closed upon her, very gentle, very firmly; then opened and set her free.

"Will you lead the way?" he said.

CHAPTER VI

A very hilarious party gathered at the table that night. Burleigh Wentworth was in uproarious spirits which seemed to infect nearly everyone else.

In the midst of the running tide of joke and banter Violet sat as one apart. Now and then she joined spasmodically in the general merriment, but often she did not know what she laughed at. There was a great fear at her heart, and it tormented her perpetually. That note that she had crumpled and burnt! His eyes had rested upon it during the moment he had held it in his hand. How much had they seen? And what was it that had induced him in the first place to declare his intention of curtailing their visit? Why had he reminded her that she was his wife? Surely he must have heard something—suspected something! But what?

Covertly she watched him during that interminable dinner, watched his clear-cut face with its clever forehead and intent eyes, his slightly scornful, wholly unyielding lips. She cast her thoughts backwards over their honeymoon, trying somehow to trace an adequate reason for the fear that gripped her. He had been very forbearing with her throughout that difficult time. He had been gentle; he had been considerate. Though he had asserted and maintained his mastery over her, though his will had subdued hers, he had never been unreasonable, never so much as impatient, in his treatment of her. He had given her no cause for the dread that now consumed her, unless it were that by his very self-restraint he had inspired in her a fear of the unknown.

No, she had to look farther back than her honeymoon, back to the days of Burleigh Wentworth's trial, and the almost superhuman force by which he had dragged him free. It was that force with which she would have very soon to reckon, that overwhelming, all-consuming power that had wrestled so victoriously in Wentworth's defence. How would it be when she found herself confronted by that? She shivered and dared not think.

The stream of gaiety flowed on around her. Someone—Wentworth she knew later—proposed a game of hide-and-seek by moonlight in and about the old ruins on the shores of the loch. She would have preferred to

remain behind, but he made a great point of her going also. She did not know if Percival went or not, but she did not see him among the rest. The fun was fast and furious, the excitement great. Almost in spite of herself she was drawn in.

And then, how it happened she scarcely knew, she found herself hiding alone with Wentworth in a little dark boat-house on the edge of the water. He had a key with him, and she heard him turn it on the inside.

"I think we are safe here," he said, and then in the darkness his arms were round her. He called her by every endearing name that he could think of.

Why was it his ardour failed to reach her? She had yielded to him only that afternoon. She had suffered him to kiss away her tears. But now something in her held her back. She drew herself away.

"Come and sit in the boat!" he said. "We will go on the water as soon as the hue and cry is over. Hush! Don't speak! They are coming now."

They sat with bated breath while the hunt spread round their hiding-place. The water lapped mysteriously in front of them with an occasional gurgling chuckle. The ripples danced far out in the moonlight. It was a glorious night, with a keenness in the air that was like the touch of steel.

Violet drew her cloak more closely about her. She felt very cold.

Someone came and battered at the door. "I'm sure they're here," cried a voice.

"They can't be," said another. "The place is locked, and there's no key."

"Bet you it's on the inside!" persisted the first, and a match was lighted and held to the lock.

The man inside laughed under his breath. The key was dangling between his hands.

"Oh, come on!" called a girl's voice from the distance. "They wouldn't hide in there. It's such a dirty hole. Lady Violet is much too fastidious."

And Violet, sitting within, drew herself together with a little shrinking movement. Yes, that had always been their word for her. She was fastidious. She had rather prided herself upon having that reputation. She had always regarded women who made themselves cheap with scorn.

The chase passed on, and Wentworth's arm slipped round her again. "Now we are safe," he said. "By Jove, dear, how I have schemed for this! It was really considerate of your worthy husband to absent himself."

Again, gently but quite decidedly, she drew herself away. "I think Freda is right," she said. "This is rather a dirty place."

He laughed. "A regular black hole! But wait till I can get you out on to the loch! It's romantic enough out there. But look here, Violet! I've got to come to an understanding with you. Now that we've found each other, darling, we are not going to lose each other again, are we?"

She was silent in the darkness.

He leaned to her and took her hand. "Oh, why did you go and complicate matters by getting married?" he said. "It was such an obvious—such a fatal—mistake. You knew I cared for you, didn't you?"

"You—had never told me so," she said, her voice very low.

"Never told you! I tried to tell you every time we met. But you were always so aloof, so frigid. On my soul, I was afraid to speak. Tell me now!" His hand was fast about hers. "When did you begin to care?"

She sat unyielding in his hold. "I—imagined I cared—a very long time ago," she said, with an effort.

"What! Before that trial business?" he said. "I wish to Heaven I'd known!"

"Why?" she said.

"Because if I'd known I wouldn't have been such a fool," he said with abrupt vehemence. "I would never have run that infernal risk."

"What risk?" she said.

He laughed, a half-shamed laugh. "Oh, I didn't quite mean to let that out. Consider it unsaid! Only a man without ties is apt to risk more than a man who has more to lose. I've had the most fantastic ill-luck this year that ever fell any man's lot before."

"At least you were vindicated," Violet said.

"Oh, that!" said Wentworth. "Well, it was beginning to be time my luck turned, wasn't it? It was rank enough to be caught, but if I'd been convicted, I'd have hanged myself. Now tell me! Was it Field's brilliant defence that dazzled you into marrying him?"

She did not answer him. She turned instead and faced him in the darkness. "Burleigh! What do you mean by risk? What do you mean by being—caught? You don't mean—you can't mean—that you—that you were—guilty!"

Her voice shook. The words tumbled over each other. Her hand wrenched itself free.

"My dear girl!" said Wentworth. "Don't be so melodramatic! No man is guilty until he is proved so. And—thanks to the kindly offices of your good husband—I did not suffer the final catastrophe."

"But—but—but—" Her utterance seemed suddenly choked. She rose, feeling blindly for the door.

"It's locked," said Wentworth, and there was a ring of malice in his voice. "I say, don't be unreasonable! You shouldn't ask unnecessary questions, you know. Other people don't. For Heaven's sake, let's enjoy what we've got and leave the past alone!"

"Open the door!" gasped Violet in a whisper.

He rose without haste. Her white dress made her conspicuous in the dimness. Her cloak had fallen from her, and she seemed unaware of it.

He reached out as if to open the door, and then very suddenly his intention changed. He caught her to him.

"By Heaven," he said, and laughed savagely, "I'll have my turn first!"

She turned in his hold, turned like a trapped creature in the first wild moment of capture, struggling so fiercely that she broke through his grip before he had made it secure.

He stumbled against the boat, but she sprang from him, sprang for the open moonlight and the lapping water, and the next instant she was gone from his sight.

CHAPTER VII

The water was barely up to her knees, but she stumbled among slippery stones as she fled round the corner of the boat-house, and twice she nearly fell. There were reeds growing by the bank; she struggled through them, frantically fighting her way.

She was drenched nearly to the waist when at last she climbed up the grassy slope. She heard the seekers laughing down among the ruins some distance away as she did so, and for a few seconds she thought she might escape to the house unobserved. She turned in that direction, her wet skirts clinging round her. And then, simultaneously, two things happened.

The key ground in the lock of the boat-house, and, ere Wentworth could emerge, a man walked out from the shadow of some trees and met her on the path. She stopped short in the moonlight, standing as one transfixed. It was her husband.

He came to her, moving more quickly than was his wont. "My dear child!" he ejaculated.

Feverishly she sought to make explanation. "I—I was hiding—down on the bank. I slipped into the lake. It was very foolish of me. But—but—really I couldn't help it."

Her teeth were chattering. He took her by the arm.

"Come up to the house at once!" he said.

She looked towards the boat-house. The door was ajar, but Wentworth had not shown himself. With a gasp of relief she yielded to Field's insistent hand.

Her knees were shaking under her, but she made a valiant effort to control them. He did not speak further, and something in his silence dismayed her. She trembled more and more as she walked. Her wet clothes impeded her. She remembered with consternation that she had left her cloak in the boat-house. In her horror at this discovery she stopped.

As she did so a sudden tumult behind them told her that Wentworth had been sighted by his pursuers.

In the same moment Field very quietly turned and lifted her in his arms. She gave a gasp of astonishment.

"I think we shall get on quicker this way," he said. "Put your arm over my shoulder, won't you?"

He spoke as gently as if she had been a child, and instinctively she obeyed. He bore her very steadily straight to the house.

CHAPTER VIII

In the safe haven of her own room Violet recovered somewhat. Field left her in the charge of her maid, but the latter she very quickly dismissed. She sat before the fire clad in a wrapper, still shivering spasmodically, but growing gradually calmer.

"I believe there is a letter on the writing-table," she said to the maid as she was about to go out. "Take it with you and put it in the box downstairs!"

The girl returned and took up the letter that Field had written that evening. "It isn't stamped my lady," she began; and then in a tone of surprise: "Why, it is addressed to your ladyship!"

Violet started. "Give it to me!" she commanded "That will do. I shall not be wanting you again to-night."

The girl withdrew, and she crouched lower over the fire, the letter in her hand.

Yes, it was addressed to her in her husband's clear, strong writing—addressed to her and written in her presence!

Her hands were trembling very much as she tore open the envelope. A baffling mist danced before her eyes. For a few seconds she could see nothing. Then with a great effort she commanded herself, and read:

"My own Beloved Wife,

"If I have made your life a misery, may I be forgiven! I meant otherwise. I saw you on the ramparts this evening. That is why I want you to leave this place to-morrow. But if you do not wish to share my life any longer, I will let you go. Only in Heaven's name choose some worthier means than this!

"I am yours to take or leave. P.F."

Hers—to take—or leave! She felt again the steady hold upon her arm, the equally steady release. That was what he had meant. That!

She sat bowed like an old woman. He had seen! And instead of being angry on his own account, he was concerned only on hers. She was his own beloved wife. He was—hers to take or leave!

Suddenly a great sob broke from her. She laid her face down upon the note she held....

There came a low knock at the door that divided her room from the one adjoining. She started swiftly up as one caught in a guilty act.

"Can I come in?" Field said.

She made some murmured response, and he opened the dividing door. A moment he stood on the threshold; then he came quietly forward. He carried her cloak upon his arm.

He deposited it upon the back of a chair, and came to her. "I hoped you would be in bed," he said.

"I am trying—to get warm," she muttered almost inarticulately.

"Have you had a hot drink since your accident?" he asked.

She shook her head. "I told West—I couldn't."

He turned and rang the bell. He must have seen his note tightly grasped in her hand, but he made no comment upon it.

"Sit down again!" he said gently, and, stooping, poked the sinking fire into a blaze.

She obeyed him almost automatically. After a moment he laid down the poker, and drew the chair with her in it close to the fender. Then he picked up the cloak and put it about her shoulders, and finally moved away to the door.

She heard him give an order to a servant, and sat nervously awaiting his return. But he did not come back to her. He went outside and waited in the passage.

There ensued an interval of several minutes, and during that time she sat crouched over the fire, holding her cloak about her, and shivering, shivering all over. Then the door which he had left ajar closed quietly, and she knew that he had come back into the room.

She drew herself together, striving desperately to subdue her agitation.

He came to her side and stooped over her. "I want you to drink this," he said.

She glanced up at him swiftly, and as swiftly looked away. "Don't bother about me!" she said. "I—am not worth it."

He passed the low words by. "It's only milk with a dash of brandy," he said. "Won't you try it?"

Very reluctantly she took the steaming beverage from him and began to drink.

He remained beside her, and took the cup from her when she had finished.

"Now," he said, "wouldn't it be wise of you to go to bed?"

She made a movement that was almost convulsive. She had his note still clasped in her hand.

After a moment, without lifting her eyes, she spoke. "Percival, why did you—what made you—write this?"

"I owed it to you," he said.

"You—meant it?" she said, with an effort.

"Yes. I meant it." He spoke with complete steadiness.

"But—but—" She struggled with herself for an instant; then, "Oh, I've got to tell you!" she burst forth passionately. "I'm—very wicked."

"No," he said quietly, and laid a constraining hand upon her as she sat. "That is not so."

She contracted at his touch. "You don't know me. I wrote you a note this evening, trying to explain. I told you I meant to leave you. But—I didn't mean you to read it till I was gone. Did you read it?"

"No," he said. "I guessed what you had done."

Desperately she went on. "You've got to know the worst. I was ready to go away with him. We—were such old friends, and I thought—I thought—I knew him." She bowed herself lower under his hand. Her face was hidden. "I thought he was at least a gentleman. I thought I could trust him. I—believed in him."

"Ah!" said Field. "And now?"

"Now"—her head was sunk almost to her knees—"I know him—for what—he is." Her voice broke in bitter weeping. "And I had given so much—so much—to save him!" she sobbed.

"I know," Field said. "He wasn't worth the sacrifice." He stood for a moment or two as though in doubt; then knelt suddenly down beside her and drew her to him.

She made as if she would resist him, but finally, as he held her, impulsively she yielded. She sobbed out her agony against his breast. And he soothed her as he might have soothed a child.

But though presently he dried her tears, he did not kiss her. He spoke, but his voice was devoid of all emotion.

"You are blaming the wrong person for all this. It wasn't Wentworth's fault. He has probably been a crook all his life. It wasn't yours. You couldn't be expected to detect it. But"—he paused—"don't you realise now why I am offering you the only reparation in my power?" he said.

She was trembling, but she did not raise her head or attempt to move, though his arms were ready to release her.

"No. I don't," she said.

Very steadily he went on: "You have not wronged me. It was I who did the wrong. I could have made you see his guilt. It would have been infinitely easier than establishing his innocence before the world. But—I have always wanted the unattainable. I knew that you were out of reach, and so I wanted you. Afterwards, very soon afterwards, I found I wanted even more than what I had bargained for. I wanted your friendship. That was what the sapphire stood for. You didn't understand. I had handicapped myself too heavily. So I took what I could get, and missed the rest."

He stopped. She still lay against his breast.

"Why did you want—my friendship?" she whispered.

He made a curious gesture, as if he faced at last the inevitable. When he answered her his voice was very low. He seemed to speak against his will. "I—loved you."

"Ah!" It was scarcely more than a breath uttering the words. "And you never told me!"

He was silent.

She raised herself at last and faced him. Her hands were on his shoulders. "Percival," she said, and there was a strange light shining in the eyes that he had dried. "Is your love so small, then—as to be not—worth—mentioning?"

For the first time in her memory he avoided her look. "No," he said.

"What then?" Her voice was suddenly very soft and infinitely appealing.

He opened his arms with a gesture of renunciation "It is—beyond words," he said.

She leaned nearer. Her hands slipped upwards, clasping his neck.

"It is the greatest thing that has ever come to me," she said, and in her voice there throbbed a new note which he had never heard in it before. "Do you think—oh, do you think—I would cast—that—away?"

He did not speak in answer. It seemed as if he could not. That which lay between them was indeed beyond words. Only in the silence he took her again into his arms and kissed her on the lips.

Death Makes a Mistake

When Reggie Van Fiddler sauntered into the cool somber depths of the Midland Club's lobby, he was feeling in an exceptionally amiable mood. There was a song in his heart and a bland, dreamily vague smile on his long, narrow face.

This state of blissful tranquility could be attributed to the fact that Reggie's tan and white shoes were taking him directly toward the Club Bar, where he planned to while away the day sipping various long, cool drinks. And Reggie was always happy when the immediate future held the prospects of a drink.

He nodded brightly to a uniformed attendant.

"Glorious morning, isn't he?" he said.

"It was a glorious morning," the attendant corrected politely.

Reggie looked blankly at a clock on the wall and a puzzled frown spread over his equine features.

"Well, well," he muttered, shaking his head, "how'd that happen?" He sauntered on toward the bar, nibbling at a hang nail. The morning had slipped away from him somehow. Here it was two o'clock in the afternoon already. It was quite a blow.

He remembered then that he had slept until twelve thirty and he brightened considerably. That explained it. Whistling merrily he strode on into the dim cool bar, with its heavy brown fixtures and solid atmosphere of masculinity.

The bartender set up his usual drink and with knowledge born of long experience, immediately began the preparation of a second.

Reggie sipped his drink and relaxed.

For several moments he stood at the bar, lazily contented, his brain slowed to about one revolution per minute. Finally he happened to glance

toward the end of the bar and he noticed a small, dark, narrow-eyed man watching him closely.

Reggie smiled uncertainly and returned to his drink. The dark man at the end of the bar was the only other customer and Reggie knew that he was not a member of the club, for he had never seen him before in his life.

Reggie finished his drink and when the bartender set another before him he glanced again toward the end of the bar. The little dark man was still there, regarding him, it seemed, with a steady fixed stare.

Reggie coughed nervously and gulped his drink. There was something in the dark little man's beady-eyed gaze that disturbed him. He had another quick drink and peeked from the corner of his eye at the little dark man.

There was something sinister about the chap, he felt sure. Reggie was the owner of an extremely lurid imagination and now, warmed by the glow of alcohol, he began to envision all sorts of wild possibilities.

After his fourth drink he was certain that the man was an Axis agent. Just why an Axis agent would be staring at him he had no idea, but he still felt sure the man was a Nazi.

Reggie finished his drink and set the glass on the bar. Then he casually sauntered toward the door. A few paces from the room's only exit, he paused and under the pretense of inspecting a faded sports print on the wall, sneaked a quick glance at the dark little man.

The dark little man was still staring at him with narrowed, shaded eyes.

Reggie yawned ostentatiously and inched closer to the door. He was going to make a break for it, but it would have to be fast and clever. His heart was pounding with more gusto than usual and there were bright spots of excitement in his pale cheeks. This new role of dodging the Gestapo appealed enormously to his comic strip sense of melodrama.

Headlines popped before his mind's eye.

REGGIE VAN FIDDLER MAKES ESCAPE!

From what he was going to escape he wasn't quite sure, but he felt that the details would be in the body of the news story. Headlines didn't tell everything, did they?

Within a foot of the door he turned casually and took one last look at the little man who was staring so intently at him. Then, with a sudden slithering motion, he slipped through the door.

He collided heavily with a small figure.

"I'm sorry," he stammered. "I'm in a bit of a hurry."

He turned and started away, but he had barely taken three strides when he jerked to a stop. An expression of dazed amazement stole over his face and his sleepy eyes opened wide.

Wheeling suddenly he stared back at the small figure he had collided with. The man was still standing in the corridor that led from the bar, regarding Reggie with a fixed, thoughtful expression.

And he was the same dark little man Reggie had left *inside* the bar room seconds before!

Reggie gulped audibly. His adam's apple bobbed in his throat like a mouse in a sock.

How had the dark little man gotten out of the bar ahead of him?

Reggie didn't know and he had no inclination to wait and ask questions. With one last incredulous look over his shoulder he wheeled and loped across the lobby, down the marble steps, through the club's revolving doors and into the street.

He walked swiftly, mopping his forehead with his handkerchief.

The experience had been an unnerving one. When he reached the end of the block he hailed a cab and gave the driver the address of another bar.

As the cab rolled across the Loop Reggie settled back and gnawed nervously at his finger nails. Thoughtful meditation and analysis were not his strongest suits; in fact any thinking at all was an annoying chore to him, but he felt now that he had better bend his brain to the problem of the dark little man whom he'd seen at the club.

The chap was obviously interested in him, but why? There was no reasonable answer to that question, and there was no explanation to the way the little fellow had popped up *outside* the bar, when Reggie had seen him, a split-second before, *inside* the bar.

Reggie was still stewing over these matters when the cab came to a stop before a swanky glitter joint which catered to afternoon revellers and jitterbugs of both sexes.

Inside the smoky, dimly lighted den of din and discord Reggie forgot his troubles long enough to order a drink, his fifth of the afternoon. He was conscious of a vague buzzing between his ears and there was a pleasant mellow glow in the region of his solar plexus.

Had it not been for his disturbing experience at the Midland club, he would have been feeling very, very fine.

When his drink arrived he sipped it appreciatively and glanced about the crowded bar, looking for a familiar face. In one corner of the room he saw a tall young man in tweeds lounging against the wall with a drink in his hand. With a glad cry Reggie scrambled from his bar stool and lurched across the crowded floor, weaving his way with drunken dexterity through the jitterbugging maniacs.

"Hi!" he cried, when he reached the tweed-clad young man's side. "How've you been, Ricky? Have a drink?"

"Been fine," the young man answered. "Got a drink. Name isn't Ricky."

"Not Ricky?" Reggie shook his head frowning. "Could've sworn you were good old Ricky Davis, chap I knew at school. Well, how're things?"

"Good," the young man answered. "Have a drink?"

"Got one," Reggie said. "Got to go now. It's been nice seeing you again, Ricky."

He started to weave his way back to the bar. Suddenly he stopped, his eyes focusing in fascination on the figure of a man at the bar. A man who had appropriated the seat which Reggie had vacated.

The man was small and dark. His eyes were narrow and inscrutable. He was the same person Reggie had seen at the club.

The breath left Reggie's lungs in a rush.

Obviously the man had followed him here!

As he stood, transfixed, in the middle of the floor, the man turned and looked straight at him, a peculiar thoughtful expression on his dark face. After studying Reggie for a long interval he turned slowly back to the bar.

Reggie swallowed what was left of his drink in one gulp, but the liquor had no effect on him. After the shock he'd received it would take liquid dynamite to bolster him up.

He reeled back to the tall young man who was leaning against the wall.

"Ricky!" he cried hoarsely. "I'm being followed. Axis agents are after me."

"Name isn't Ricky," the tall young man said. "Why?"

"Why what?" Reggie said blankly. He seemed to have fumbled the conversational ball. He wished the young man would speak with more clarity and add a few articles and pronouns to his sentences.

"Why are they following you?" the young man said peevishly. "Nothing better to do?"

"That's just it," Reggie said. "I don't know why I'm being followed. But everywhere I go this little man sticks to me like a postage stamp."

"Where is he now?"

Reggie pointed dramatically at the dark little man.

"At the bar. He took the stool I left. He's right between that fat old man and that young girl with the red hair."

The tweed-clad young man stared in the direction of Reggie's pointing finger, then he frowned and glanced down at Reggie.

"Any pink elephants, yet?"

"I'm not drunk," Reggie said indignantly. "That man has been following me like a conga partner all afternoon."

The tall young man patted Reggie patiently on the shoulder.

"Sleep and rest will make a new man of you," he said. "Go home. Go to bed. You've got hallucinations."

"Hallucinations!" Reggie cried over the din of the orchestra. "What do you mean? Don't you see the man I mean? Right between the fat old man and the girl with the red hair?"

The tweedish young man shook his head.

"The stool between the fat old man and the red-haired girl is completely unoccupied," he said in the patient voice of a man instructing a very young child.

Reggie shook his head bewilderedly. There was a sudden cold hollow in the pit of his stomach. He opened and closed his mouth several times without producing a sound.

"Are you serious?" he finally managed to gasp.

"Certainly," the young man answered. "There's no one on the bar stool you left. You're just seeing things. Take my advice and go home. You've had too much giggle water."

Reggie set his drink down hastily. For a long deliberate moment he studied the back of the dark little man at the bar. Then he shook his head

dazedly. Maybe this was all some wild product of his imagination. Maybe he *was* having hallucinations....

He shook his head again and then he shook hands with the young man in the tweed suit.

"I'm going home, Ricky," he said firmly. "Say hello to all the gang for me."

"Name isn't Ricky," the young man said, sipping from his drink, "but I'll tell the boys you were asking."

"Good," Reggie said.

He left the crowded bar by a back entrance. The warm sunshine was pleasant and reassuring. People hurried past him, traffic surged in the streets, and everything was quite normal. He breathed a deep sigh and hailed a cab. He gave the driver the address of his apartment and then settled back against the soft leather cushions.

Sleep was all he needed. That was all.

When he reached his apartment on the near North Side he had succeeded in convincing himself that his peculiar experiences of the afternoon were only products of his fevered imagination.

As he let himself into his apartment he had firmly resolved to strictly ration his reading of comic strips and spy magazines. They were pretty strong meat if they weren't handled with discretion.

The pleasantly furnished living room of his apartment was shrouded in late-afternoon semi-darkness and, when he closed and locked the door behind him, he switched on the lights.

The first thing he saw when he walked into the room was the little dark man whom he'd seen at the Club and at the bar a few minutes previously.

The dark little man was sitting in a straight chair, his hands resting on his knees. There was a faint smile on his face as he studied Reggie with calm, inscrutable eyes.

Reggie staggered back a few steps, clapping one hand hysterically to his forehead. He couldn't believe his eyes. He had left this man at a bar in the Loop, but here he was now, sitting calmly and unconcernedly in the living room of his apartment.

"How did you get in here?" he gasped.

The dark little man stood up and smiled.

"Is that important?" he asked softly. "I am here and that is all that matters."

Reggie swallowed loudly. There was something disturbing about the calm ambiguity of the man's statement. He rubbed his damp palms together nervously.

"Can I get you a drink?" he blurted.

The dark little man shook his head slowly.

Reggie looked at him uneasily, noticing him in detail for the first time. He was small, hardly more than five feet two and he was slenderly built. His hair was jet black and it combed straight back from a high, delicate forehead. He wore severely tailored black clothes that fitted his small frame without a wrinkle. But his eyes dominated his entire personality, for they were a cold chilling black, lusterless and unwinking, as unrevealing as twin diamonds.

Reggie shivered slightly and looked wistfully toward the door of the apartment. He coughed nervously.

"Sorry to seem rude," he said, laughing weakly, "but I've got to be toddling off now. It's been nice—er—running into you. There are magazines on the table, liquor in the ice box, so just make yourself at home."

He backed cautiously toward the door, smiling nervously.

"Don't wait up for me," he said. "I've—"

"Wait," the dark little man said quietly, "I must talk with you."

"Some other time," Reggie said, feeling behind him for the door knob. "Awfully rushed just now. Sorry but—"

"Wait!" the little man said again, but this time his voice cracked like a whip. "Didn't you hear me? I must talk with you?"

Reggie jumped at the cracking tone of the man's voice. His hand jerked away from the door knob as if it were red hot.

"Oh, you want to talk to me?" he said foolishly. "I didn't understand you."

"My name," the little man said, "is," he paused and smiled cryptically, "Demise."

"Glad to know you," Reggie said. "My name is—"

"I know your name," Mr. Demise said. "I know everything about you, Reginald Van Fiddler. I know things about you that you don't know yourself."

"Do you now?" Reggie said, becoming interested in spite of himself. "For instance?"

"I know that you are about to take a long trip," Mr. Demise said.

"That's not news," Reggie said. "My draft board just classified me 1-A. I'll be taking a long trip very shortly."

"That is not the trip I am referring to," Mr. Demise said. "You are going on a trip with me."

Reggie blinked. He couldn't think of anyone with whom he would rather not take a trip than this dark, sinister little man who called himself Mr. Demise. What did Demise mean, anyway?

"It's nice of you, and all that," he said, "but I don't think I'll be able to make it. My draft board might not like it."

"They will understand," Mr. Demise said.

"I don't know about that," Reggie said. He was beginning really to worry. There was something damnably inevitable about Mr. Demise's calm statements. "They're pretty ticklish about such things. I think we'd just better forget the whole idea."

"That is impossible," Mr. Demise said.

Reggie rubbed his moist palms on his trouser legs.

"Who are you?" he asked hesitantly. "Have you been following me around all day just to sell me on the idea of a trip? Are you from Cook's tours?"

Mr. Demise smiled and shook his head.

"I am not interested in selling you the idea of a trip. I am simply telling you that you are going on a trip. I have already made all the arrangements. There is nothing that can possibly change them."

"Where am I going?" Reggie asked. His voice was a whisper.

"With me," Mr. Demise said.

"That's no answer," Reggie said, clutching at straws. "Who are you? Where are you going?"

Mr. Demise smiled again, very faintly. He walked slowly to the mantelpiece and plucked a rose from a vase. His hand closed gently over the flower as he turned to face Reggie.

"Perhaps this will answer your questions," he said softly.

He opened his hand and dropped the flower to the floor at Reggie's feet. Reggie's eyes widened in sheer amazement.

For the soft glowing beauty of the flower was faded forever. It lay on the floor, a blackened, dead reminder of its former glory.

"It's dead," he said incredulously. "It withered at the touch of your hand."

Mr. Demise nodded slowly and there was a wistful sadness in his face.

"All living things die at my touch," he said. "For I am Death!"

"Death!" Reggie echoed. For an instant he stared blankly at Mr. Demise. "Death!" he repeated. "Why that's the most ridiculous thing I've ever heard." He actually felt a sensation of relief in the realization that he'd been entertaining some loony instead of an Axis agent as he'd feared. "You're off your trolley," he said to Mr. Demise. "You'd better get moving before your keeper finds you. Death! What a gag!"

"I assure you it is not a gag," Mr. Demise said slowly. "Your time is near at hand and I have been sent to take you to the land of Darkness."

"Think again, chum," Reggie said emphatically. "I'm not going to Harlem with you or anyone else and that's final."

"It is useless to protest," Mr. Demise said. "Your destiny is sealed. You must come with me."

"You are plain balmy," Reggie said. "I've never heard a sillier yarn in my life. So you're Death, are you?"

Mr. Demise nodded. "I am one of his agents."

"Changing your story a little, aren't you?" Reggie said triumphantly. "Well, since when has Death been announced by personal messengers? A man steps in front of a car. He's killed. That's all there is to it. There aren't little black men standing on the curb pushing him into the street, are there? And they don't come around a couple of hours in advance tipping him off, do they? No!"

"When a mortal passes over," Mr. Demise said, "there is always an agent of Death present superintending the details. But he is not always visible to his charge."

Reggie poured himself a drink and lit a cigarette.

"Well, thanks just the same," he said, "but I don't want any special effects when I pass over. If there's a messenger of Death around I don't *want* to see him. Just let him stay invisible. That's the way I want it."

Mr. Demise looked slightly pained. There was an embarrassed look on his normally expressionless features.

"Usually the agent of Death is invisible," he said. "In fact his orders are to remain invisible under all circumstances."

"Okay then," Reggie said. "You're breaking orders. Be a nice obedient chum now and fade away."

Mr. Demise shrugged and stepped backward—and *suddenly he was gone!* He had disappeared into thin air, soundlessly, instantaneously.

"Why what?" Reggie said blandly. He started to sip his drink when suddenly the full realization of what had happened burst on him. The drink fell from his nerveless fingers with a crash.

He stared frantically about the room.

Mr. Demise was gone! It was incredible! It was unbelievable! But it was a fact!

He poured himself another drink and drained it in one breathless gulp. He felt his reason tottering as his gaze swung desperately about the room.

"Mr. Demise!" he cried. "Come back! Where are you!"

"I am here before you," Mr. Demise's voice sounded in the air. "Are you convinced now?"

Reggie mopped his forehead weakly.

"Yes," he gasped. "I'm convinced."

Mr. Demise reappeared as suddenly as he had vanished. He smiled faintly at Reggie. He was apparently completely unruffled by his transformation.

Reggie poured himself another drink with trembling fingers.

"D-don't do that any more," he pleaded.

"As you wish," Mr. Demise said agreeably. "I am sorry if I shocked you. I can see now that it was a mistake to let you see me in the first place. I understand now why it is strictly forbidden."

Reggie drained his drink.

"I wish you hadn't decided to break regulations," he said moodily. "I've never been so upset in all my life. Why didn't you remain invisible, if you're supposed to? You aren't going to creep into people's hearts if you pop up and announce yourself as an agent of Death and start making speeches about whisking them off to the Land of Darkness. People just don't like that sort of thing. By all means stay invisible in the future."

Mr. Demise shuffled awkwardly and for the first time his poise seemed deserting him.

"You're absolutely right," he said gloomily. "But I was curious."

"That's a fine excuse," Reggie said scathingly. "I should think they'd get a man of tact and diplomacy for your job. Not some nosy person whose curiosity runs away with him."

"You see," Mr. Demise explained miserably, "you happened to be my first assignment. I've had no experience at all in this work and I was curious to see what kind of person I was going to take back with me. And I wanted to get a first-hand reaction from you."

Reggie mixed himself another drink. He was beginning to feel belligerent.

"So?" he cried. "They sent an amateur down to get me, did they? I suppose I don't rate an experienced escort. So they sent you. I'm surprised they didn't just tell the office boy to do the job."

"Your levity is poor taste," Mr. Demise observed frigidly. "I can assure you that I am perfectly qualified to act as your guide to the Other World. I have studied hard to perfect myself for my work and I was considered one of the outstanding pupils in the class which just graduated. You do not have to relieve your spite by making slighting references to my professional ability."

"Bah!" Reggie said. "If you have any professional ability it hasn't been noticeable so far. You're just out of some college, aren't you? You talk like a college boy. You don't make sense."

Mr. Demise looked hurt.

"I'm sorry you're taking this attitude," he said. "I had hoped we could be friends."

"Friends!" Reggie shrieked. "Am I expected to be friendly with some ghoul who comes prowling around threatening to whisk me off to Eternity? What more do they expect of me? To pay my own way too, I suppose."

"Your passage will be taken care of at the other end," Mr. Demise said. "Since you have taken such an ungracious stand we will not dally further."

"Now wait a minute," Reggie said. He felt his throat getting dry. The prospects of Death were not pleasant. He didn't want to die right now. He had things to do. There was that badminton match next week with Snuffy Smith....

"Can't we put this thing off a while?" he asked hopefully. "There's no sense in rushing things, I always say. Why don't you go off and get yourself a lot of experience and then come back for me?"

"That is impossible," Mr. Demise said flatly. He drew from his inside coat pocket a slim black book which he opened to the first page. "You are first on my list and I must carry out my orders to the letter. All the information as to person, place and method is contained in this book and it would be impossible to change it."

"Place and method, eh?" Reggie said weakly. He ran a finger around the inside of his collar. "You mean you've got the dope there on how it's going to happen and when it's going to happen?"

"Certainly," Mr. Demise replied. "We don't use a hit-or-miss method. Everything is worked out to a science. You, for instance, are—"

Mr. Demise paused and shook his head. "No," he continued, "I can't tell you. That is also against instructions."

"You haven't paid much attention to instructions so far," Reggie said sulkily. "Can't you give me a hint as to how I'm going to get it?"

Mr. Demise shook his head firmly.

"That would be an unthinkable breach of conduct," he said, shaking his head severely and frowning. "Absolutely unthinkable."

"All right," Reggie said resignedly. There was no point, he realized, in arguing with this inhuman icicle. "But let's have a drink before we get down to—er—business."

"I am not allowed to drink while on duty," Mr. Demise said primly.

"For gosh sakes," Reggie said disgustedly, "you weren't thinking about your precious orders and regulations when you followed me around, scaring the hell out of me. Oh no! That was all right. But when I ask you to do a little something outside the letter of your instructions it's no soap. If there's anything fair in that I can't see it."

Mr. Demise shuffled uncomfortably.

"It was indiscreet of me to allow you to see me," he said thoughtfully. "Perhaps your objection is justifiable. It might square things a bit if I would take a drink with you. Not that I would expect to enjoy the stuff but it seems the fair thing to do."

"Fine," Reggie said.

He mixed two drinks in somber silence. Because he realized that it was probably the last time he would ever perform that pleasant chore, he put his heart and soul into the task and when he finally handed Mr. Demise his drink it was a veritable masterpiece.

Mr. Demise drank the drink—it was a double Martini with a splash of Quantro—in one long appreciative gulp. He set the glass down and sighed contentedly.

"Another?" Reggie suggested hopefully.

"No," Mr. Demise said, "one is plenty. As a matter of fact," he said, "that's the first drink I ever had. Alcohol is one of our finest helpers but we aren't supposed to touch it. Personally I think its intoxicating effect is greatly overrated."

Reggie leaned forward and there was a peculiar gleam in his eyes.

"So that was your first drink, eh?" he asked. "And you don't feel anything?"

"Not a thing," said Mr. Demise. "Of course I notice a certain glow, but that's all."

"Just a certain glow, eh?" Reggie said.

"Thash all," Mr. Demise said. He sat down suddenly. "And my tongue ish a lil' thick."

"Well, that's only natural," Reggie said. He mixed another drink and there was a cryptic smile on his lips. "Alcohol is a peculiar thing. One drink will addle a person's wits and the second will act as an antidote. Strange, isn't it?"

Mr. Demise rocked slightly in the chair. His coal-black eyes were a bit glazed. "Ish very strange," he conceded.

"Possibly you'd like to try the antidote?" Reggie said casually.

"Might not be a bad idea," said Mr. Demise.

Reggie handed him the second drink and watched contentedly as Mr. Demise drank it down. Mr. Demise set down the glass.

"You wush right," he said, slumping against the back of the chair. "Absolutely right. Second drink ish an antidote. Jush what I needed."

"Absolutely," Reggie agreed solemnly.

Mr. Demise closed his eyes but he opened them almost immediately. He struggled up to a sitting position.

"I hash something to do," he muttered. His hand groped into the inside of his coat, returned with the slim black book. "Very important," he mumbled. "First assignment. Can't have any slip ups."

Reggie moistened his lips nervously. He eyed the little black book carefully. That might be the way....

"How about another drink, old boy," he said heartily. He mixed one quickly, handed it to Mr. Demise. Mr. Demise took it in his left hand and Reggie deftly plucked the black book from his right hand. Mr. Demise appeared not to notice the exchange. He drank the drink methodically.

Reggie tossed the book under a coffee table.

Mr. Demise climbed unsteadily to his feet.

Reggie took him by the arm. "What say we go out and have a few quick antidotes?" he suggested.

Mr. Demise nodded stupidly. He mumbled something unintelligible and allowed Reggie to lead him to the door. Reggie's brain was working at full speed. If he could just ditch Mr. Demise and get back to the book everything might be saved. His idea was sheer brilliance....

Their first destination was a bar. Reggie found a cab, shoved Mr. Demise inside and ordered the driver to one of the dozens of friendly bars with which he was familiar.

At the first stop Mr. Demise had two more drinks. When he had drained the second Reggie hauled him to his feet and started for another palate palace. His object was to keep Mr. Demise so bewildered and drunk that he would forget his job.

For a while he succeeded. Mr. Demise followed him helplessly from bar to bar and sat tottering on high stools happily pouring fiery intoxicants into his already overburdened stomach.

But finally he reached the state of saturation where the liquor produced a steadily diminishing effect. Reggie watched him worriedly and ordered more and more drinks.

But it was no use.

In spite of the enormous quantities of liquor he had consumed, Mr. Demise was slowly sobering up. His face was losing its blank expression and an intelligent gleam was creeping back into his eyes.

He began to fumble uncertainly through his pockets, a worried expression settling over his features.

Reggie slapped him on the back resoundingly.

"Have a drink!" he shouted into his ear.

Mr. Demise shook his head stubbornly.

"Got a job to do," he muttered. He went slowly through his pockets and an expression of horror replaced the worried look on his face.

"Where's my book?" he gasped. "I've lost my book! This is terrible. I've got to find it!"

"What book?" Reggie asked innocently.

"The book with all the names and places and dates and methods," Mr. Demise moaned. "I've lost it."

Reggie shrugged philosophically.

"Too bad," he said. "But things are never as black as they seem. Maybe it'll turn up somewhere. The thing to do is just sit tight until someone finds it and reports it."

"I can't wait," wailed Mr. Demise. "These things have to happen on schedule. There'd be an awful rumpus in the complaint department if I started sending people up there haphazardly. And I don't even remember whom I've got on the list. You're the only one I'm sure of."

Reggie choked on his drink.

"Yes," Mr. Demise went on obliviously, "you're the first. I'm sure of that much. And I'd better send you along right away. I'll do that much correctly, at least."

"Now, just a minute," Reggie said, "how're you sure you've got me right? I looked at that book and I don't think I'm the man you want at all."

"You looked at the book!" cried Mr. Demise with sudden suspicion. "So that's where it went. That's why you got me drunk. You stole my book, hoping to evade your destiny, didn't you?"

"Nothing of the sort," Reggie said, forcing a note of outraged indignation into his voice.

"Yes you did," Mr. Demise said. "I'm not going to wait a second longer in your case. Mr. Fiddler, prepare yourself for a long trip and don't plan on coming back."

Reggie realized that the jig was up. Mr. Demise had a grim business-like note in his voice and there was no hope of prolonging things further. Drastic action was needed, not discussion.

With a leap like a startled gazelle Reggie left his stool and bounded for the door. Before Mr. Demise could turn around, he was in the street, shouting frantically for a cab.

A cab pulled to the curb and Reggie leaped into its dark interior. Over his shoulder he saw Mr. Demise stagger from the bar, a wrathful expression stamped on his dark features.

The cab started away with a roar. Reggie shouted his address at the driver and squirmed about to peek out the rear window.

He saw Mr. Demise clambering into another cab.

"Hurry!" he shouted to his driver.

"Life or death, eh?" the cabby said conversationally.

Reggie winced. "You said it."

The cab caromed around corners, hit the Outer Drive and hurled along like a frightened cotton-tail until it reached the near North side, where it swung west and sped through the labyrinthine streets that led to Reggie's apartment.

From the rear window Reggie could see Mr. Demise's cab speeding after them, steadily closing the gap. His palms were moist and the effects of the liquor had completely faded, leaving him horribly sober. There was nothing funny about this predicament.

His cab jolted to a stop and Reggie threw a bill at the driver and leaped out and raced into the foyer of his building.

By a miraculous stroke of luck the elevator was not in use. He slammed the door and jabbed the button and the car started upward with a jerk. He breathed a long shuddering sigh of relief. Maybe there would yet be time....

The elevator stopped at his floor. Just as he opened the door and stepped out, the elevator suddenly dropped back down the shaft. One of his legs dangled down the shaft. With a startled squawk he pulled himself onto the floor landing.

Mr. Demise obviously meant business. If he'd been in that elevator everything would be all over now. As it was he still had a chance.

He let himself into his apartment, switched on the light and dove underneath the coffee table. The black book of doom was still there. Frantically Reggie opened it to the first page, found his own name.

He jerked a pencil from his pocket....

He was still scribbling furiously when the door of the apartment banged open and Mr. Demise strode into the room, his face black as a thundercloud.

Reggie dropped the pencil and hid the book from view with his body.

"So!" Mr. Demise cried. "You would try to escape?"

He raised both hands commandingly in the air.

Before he could move again Reggie wheeled about.

"Just a minute," he shrieked. He held out the slim black book to Mr. Demise. "I was sure a mistake had been made. Here! Look for yourself."

"I want no more of your tricks," Mr. Demise warned ominously.

"This is no trick," Reggie said. "You should be grateful to me for catching the error in time."

Mr. Demise took the book from Reggie and examined it carefully. The frown gradually faded from his face as his eyes lingered on the page. He shuffled his feet awkwardly and cleared his throat.

"It seems," he said in a small, chastened voice, "that a mistake has been made."

Reggie's heart pounded with hope.

"It certainly has," he said. "This entire affair should be reported to someone. That's what happens when you put inexperienced men on the job. You wind up with a bungled mess."

"I don't know how it happened," Mr. Demise said miserably. "All I can say is I'm sorry."

"Fine thing," Reggie said stuffily. "Mess up your job like this and then say you're sorry. I'd advise, Demise, that you lay off the liquor when you're supposed to be working."

"I will in the future," Mr. Demise said humbly.

"See that you do," Reggie said sternly. "Now I'd say you'd better get to work on that first assignment."

"Yes, I will," Mr. Demise said. With drooping shoulders he moved slowly to the door. With his hand on the knob he turned again to Reggie.

"I hate to be a pest," he said, "but I'm afraid I don't know how to go about this job. Maybe you could help me. Where can I find this fellow?"

Reggie chuckled and began to mix himself a drink.

"I'd advise you to try Berchtesgaden," he said. "Just ask anyone you meet. They'll tell you where you can find Adolf Hitler."

"Thank you," Mr. Demise said gratefully. "I won't slip up on this one."

"See that you don't," Reggie said.

A Digger's Christmas

It was on the Tinpot Gully diggings, now known to fame by a far more euphonious title, that early in the fifties I spent my first Christmas in Australia. There were all sorts and conditions of men there, men from every nation and every class. Englishmen and Italians, Russians and Portuguese, Persians, Chinamen, and negroes, sons of peers and London pickpockets, all rubbed shoulders on the Tinpot Gully diggings. But they came naturally enough to me in those days. At one and twenty nothing astonishes one, and I took things as I found them, and questioned not, and barely wondered at the mixed company in which I found myself. Very peaceful looked the scene as I stood at my tent door, or rather curtain, and surveyed it thus early in the morning. All the camp was sleeping. Most of the diggers had made a night of it the night before in anticipation of the holiday, and now were sleeping off the effects, so that I had it all to myself, and spite of the havoc wrought by the diggers, the gully was pretty still. We were all camped on the flat that bordered the banks of the creek, and away beyond on all sides stretched the hills, standing out clearly now in the brilliant morning sunlight, range upon range, in a series of blue ridges, till they faded away in the bluer distance. The Union Jack—emblem of authority—floated from the staff in front of the Commissioner's tent, and from my outlook I could see the sunlight gleaming on the carbines of the troopers who stood sentry over the gold tent, and digger as I was, and sworn foe to all troopers, the sunbeams on those carbine barrels gave me a comfortable sense of security, for (for the first time in our diggings' experience) my mate and I had lodged a little chamois leather bag full of gold dust and small nuggets—part of the fortune which we trusted in days to come was to take us back to the old land—with the Commissioner, and I was glad to feel in those wild times that he was fully alive to the nature of his trust. Having satisfied myself as to the safety of my property, I re-entered the tent and roused out my mate.

“Rouse out, Dick, old man! Merry Christmas to you, my boy! Merry Christmas, and many of ‘em!”

Dick turned over sleepily, rubbed his eyes, and went through exactly the same performance I had done, before he could rouse himself

sufficiently to accompany me across the hills to another creek, where, the bottom being of bed rock, the crystal water was still pure and unsullied by the digger's desecrating hand. Our dip was refreshing; we could only find time for it on Sundays and holidays such as this, and probably we appreciated it all the more for its rarity. Our toilet was simplicity itself. We each arrayed ourselves in a red flannel shirt and moleskin trousers, clean today in honour of Christmas, tucked into our high boots, while a slouch hat and a revolver in the belt completed the costume. On our return I proceeded to prepare breakfast, while Dick looked after the sick boy. Breakfast was not sumptuous; all my energies were reserved for dinner, and Dick had to make out as best he might on damper left from the night before, and the cold remains of a nondescript joint of mutton. He came back just as I had got the rough meal ready, reporting poor Wilson as a little better and awfully hungry. Then he tipped the tea—post and rails we used to call it—into our tin pannikins, and proceeded to boil part of a cabbage in the billy for the invalid. I laugh now when I think that in those days we counted a common cabbage a luxury fit to tempt a sick man's appetite; but, indeed, luxuries of all kinds were scarce, and as for that cabbage it had been procured with infinite pains and at great cost; and the odour that rose from the pot—the very offensive odour of boiled cabbage, as I now think it—appeared to us most appetising.

I went with Dick to give poor Bob Wilson his breakfast. It was a very thin, white, pinched face that looked out from among the rough bedclothes, and a skeleton hand that grasped mine.

He appreciated the cabbage, however. I have been told since that it ought to have killed him, but it didn't.

"By Jove!" he said, "it's splendid, splendid. It must have cost a lot to get it. You fellows are good to me. If it hadn't been for you two, I 'd have died like a dog,"—not quite true, for if we hadn't looked after him someone else would—"and before the next year's out I 'll try and show you how grateful I am."

And before the next year was out the poor boy was dead—murdered by some miscreant for the handful of gold in his possession, down in the lonely bush about Reedy Creek.

Wilson's wants being attended to, Dick and I began our preparations for the all important dinner. This was to consist of roast scrub turkey and plum pudding, washed down by Battle axe brandy. And here the good old cookery-book adage came into play, for as yet our bird was running wild in the scrub, and it was a case of first catch your turkey. The morning was hot, but not too hot, with just a pleasant breeze stirring in the bush, and I rather desired to go on the shooting expedition. I ventured to suggest mildly that Dick was a better hand at pudding than I was, but he saw through my little game. Pudding was not an absolute necessary of life, he said, which the turkey really was, and as I was a bad shot—there was no denying the fact, I was a very bad shot—he had better go while I stopped at home and manipulated the pudding.

Dick always had his own way in the end, and I watched him enviously as he tramped up the opposite hill-side until he was lost to view, and then I set to work on the pudding.

The whole camp was astir by now—some busy preparing their morning meal, some like me, beginning on dinner, and many too sick and seedy to think of anything but more brandy, while one or two were good enough to come and favour me with their views on the pudding. We had laid in all the necessaries at least a week before, and then I set to work to stone raisins for the first, and I trust, the last time in my life. It is laborious work. I 'd rather use a pick and shovel any day, but I knew it ought to be done, I had heard my mother say so many a time; so I stuck to it gallantly, and with sticky and aching fingers worked through that pile of raisins. Everything comes to an end at length, and at last I came to the end of those raisins, and poured them into the bucket, where the flour and currants, and sugar and candied peel were already reposing. To these I added a billy of water from the creek, and stirred the lot together with a big stick. My wife informs me that a good plum pudding can't be made without a certain proportion of suet, some spice, and six or seven eggs, but I assure you that was a very excellent pudding, and we never even thought of such things. I don't suppose we could have got them if we had, so it was just as well. After I had mixed my pudding I had one moment of deepest despair. There it lay, a yellow-looking mass at the bottom of the bucket. So far all was well, but how was that yellow mass to be turned into the orthodox jolly-

looking plum-pudding? I was cudgelling my brains over this enigma as I lighted up the fire, when one of the admiring crowd round—I suppose he must have, been a past-master in the art of cooking—solved the difficulty for me.

“Ain’t you got a pudden-cloth?” he asked.

“By Jingo!” I thought, “of course.” But I am thankful to say I did not betray my ignorance.

“A pudding-cloth,” I said, as if I had known all about it all along. “No, I haven’t a pudding-cloth; I ‘m going to use a shirt.”

Thereupon I retired to the tent, and procured a red flannel shirt—one of Dick’s—which, with the top cut off, answered admirably.

“Don’t ye, don’t ye now tie it too tight, else it won’t ‘ave room to swell,” implored my self-constituted adviser, and I followed his advice—was only too thankful for it, in fact—and by the time my mate returned with the turkey, the pudding was bubbling away in the bucket which did duty as saucepan as jolly as possible.

Our Christmas dinner was a decided success. The turkey was splendid, and the pudding, bar a slight grittiness, occasioned by my not having washed the currants, which I am told should always be done, was also good, and our guests—we had three besides Bob Wilson (guests who brought their own tin plates and knives and forks)—thoroughly appreciated it.

Nowadays I can’t eat wild turkey until it has been hung a certain time, and unless it is served up with gravy, port wine, red currant jelly, and piquante sauce, but then—well, that was an excellent fellow we had for dinner that Christmas Day; I shall never look upon his like again. After dinner, Battle-axe brandy and other drinks, varying only in degrees of strength, being plentiful, the camp became somewhat rowdy, and we quieter spirits therefore retired to a shady nook a little way up the creek, where, flat on our backs among the grass and ferns, we spent the early part of the afternoon yarning over other Christmas Days, spent in far different fashion in a far distant land. We too had Battle-axe brandy as a sort of afternoon tea, and this roused Dick up to such an extent that he burst forth into song.

Unfortunately he chose for his theme, "The Old Folks at Home," and as we joined with his clear tenor in the chorus of the pathetic old song, there was a lump in more throats than mine as we thought of our old homes, and the very small chance the most of us had of seeing the dear old folks again. When the song was done, there was a dead pause, which no one seemed inclined to break, till Left-handed Bob astonished us by singing at the top of his voice, "Christians, Awake." We were mightily taken back and astonished, but somehow the grand Christmas hymn harmonized well with the surroundings,—the green grass, and ferns, and creepers, the trickling water, and the deep blue cloudless sky, and the murmur of sounds, softened by distance, which came up from the camp below made a splendid accompaniment.

As the afternoon wore away, and the shadows grew longer, some one suggested we should go up and visit old Father Maguire, whose labours, we opined, would probably be over for the day by this time. The holy father lived about a mile up the steep hillside in a small one-roomed hut, more than half hidden by great rocks and boulders, which in primeval ages some volcanic upheaval had scattered around. It was not very easy to find the father's hut at all; he might have been a priest of Reformation days, so hidden and secluded was his dwelling, and after partaking of the old man's hospitality, it was well-nigh impossible to find your way out of the maze again. As we approached, the volume of smoke that poured out of the chimney assured us our friend was holding high revel, and sure enough, when we opened the door, the atmosphere that rushed out was like that of an oven, for the place was barely fifteen feet square, and in the fireplace was a roaring fire, large enough to roast a bullock. In the middle of the room, on a small table on which were spread the remnants of a somewhat meagre feast, sat the owner of the cabin in his shirt sleeves, while beads of perspiration trickled down his jolly red face. His right hand grasped a pannikin, and his left beat time on the table to the strains of the "Shan Van Voght," which he was shouting at the top of his voice. Father Maguire was a kindly, jolly old soul, who loved not to mortify the flesh. The weekly Friday fasts were a sore trial to him; and it was rumoured, with what truth I know not, that he went down to the camp at Deadman's Creek, there to hold mass, and afterwards invariably called upon the Commissioner, who was not one of the faithful. That young gentleman was glad enough to entertain

the jolly old priest, and always invited him to dinner, an invitation always cheerfully accepted, for the host was a man of taste, and his dinners, besides being abundant, had a refinement and a variety about them which most other dinners at that time lacked.

“By me sowl,” Father Maguire would say, as he rose from the table, “by me sowl, but it’s Friday, and it’s meself has forgot that same.” And as long as those dinners lasted the father continued to eat them, and invariably made the same remark afterwards. Peace be to his ashes—he has long since been gathered to his fathers. He was a jovial, merry old soul, fulfilling to the letter the Pauline behest, “to think no evil.” and if he did eat some few more dinners than the rules of his Church allowed, good dinners did not often come in his way, and I trust he will not be hardly judged for them.

The moment he saw us he dropped the pannikin, and rose to greet us, a funny round tub of a man, with his braces dangling behind him.

“Och, sure, an’ it’s the bhoys! Come yez in, an’ a merry Christmas to yez. Come yez in, an’ I ‘ll brew yez some scaltheen in honor av the day.”

Scaltheen was what Father Maguire was famous for, and exactly what we had come for. It was, in truth, rather a potent drink, consisting as it did of whisky, sugar, butter, and water, all boiled together in the little black kettle now singing away on the hob, and assisted materially in raising fresh difficulties round that already difficult path through the rocks.

As the old gentleman bustled round mixing his scaltheen, we became aware of another occupant of the cabin, a tall, thin, dark-haired, cadaverous-looking young priest, just fresh from All Hallows’. He sat there solemnly on an upturned brandy case in the corner, and glared disapprovingly out of his hollow black eyes at the revel going on round him. Father Maguire remembered his existence after a bit and introduced him.

“Sure an’ it’s Father Mahoney, bhoys, jist out from ould Ireland. Faix an’ he’s falin’ a bit lonesome. Sure, now, Father dear, sing, sing—it’ll do yez good. The ‘Wearin’ o’ the Green,’ Father, or ‘Garry-owen.’ Come now. His voice it’s jist beautiful, bhoys; och, but ye should jist hear him,”

and the poor old father nodded confidentially at us, fell back in his chair, his eyes gradually closed, the pannikin dropped out of his hands, and the whiskey trickled down on to the earthen floor.

Father Mahoney evidently felt that the time had now come for him to speak or for ever after hold his peace, as the marriage service has it. He rose from his seat, and stalked across the room, a tall thin figure in his long black coat, and stood over his prostrate brother.

“Father Maguire,” he said in the broadest of Cork brogues, without the ghost of a smile on his grave Irish face, “is it a song yez wantin’? Well, thin, it’s just a jeremiad I ‘d be singin’ yez, an’ not another song at all, at all.”

Then, without deigning to take any notice of us, he flung open both door and window—the atmosphere stood greatly in need of a little freshening, I must admit—and went out on to the hillside, leaving us irreverent youngsters convulsed with laughter. The fun was over now as far as we were concerned, for Father Maguire, overcome by his own magic brew, was calmly sleeping, and no efforts of ours could elicit more than a grumpy, “Arrah, thin—be still now—will yez?”

So as the shadows were growing longer and longer, and Christmas Day was rapidly drawing to a close, we turned towards the camp again. Bob Wilson had spent rather a dreary afternoon all by himself, but we cheered him with a graphic account of our visit to the two priests, got him some tea, and then when the sun had set behind the hills, adjourned to the public house, the Eldorado Hotel as it was called, there to take part in one of those festive entertainments, known as a “Bull-dance”; that is to say, a dance at which women were conspicuous by their absence. In this case, though, we were in luck, for there were actually four women among about a hundred men, namely, the landlord’s wife, a buxom matron of fifty, weighing about fourteen stone, but “game yet,” as she herself said, “to shake a leg with the youngest;” his two daughters, fair, freckled, sandy-haired damsels, who were the objects of far greater attention than their very moderate charms appeared to sanction; and pretty Lizzie, the barmaid. We always called her “Pretty Lizzie,” and if she had any other name I never heard it. She was a dainty little dark thing, with soft dark eyes and bright pink cheeks, and

seemed somehow above her station. What adverse fate had drifted her into the service of old Long Potter I 'm sure I don't know, for she had bewitching ways, and a gentle voice that won all hearts. I don't think it was the absence of all feminine society that made us find "Pretty Lizzie" so specially charming. I even think, looking back now with all the accumulated wisdom of more than thirty years, that there was something wonderfully sweet about her. Anyhow, I, along with some hundred others, was very much in love with Lizzie, and, like them, had the pain of knowing—it was really a very keen pain in those days—that my love was unrequited.

The Eldorado was but a shanty, part calico tent, part corrugated iron. The room we danced in had only a hardwood floor, and for all furniture had a counter running across one end, on which were arrayed glasses, pannikins, and bottles. Behind this, Long Potter stood, dispensing refreshments to his guests, for which they paid in coin of the realm or gold dust. The music was provided by an old sailor with a fiddle and two concertinas, and if the guttering tallow candles and evil-smelling oil lamps did not provide light enough, outside was the glorious moon, now at the full, a round yellow disc poised in the dark, velvety sky. They were a rough crowd, those diggers, rowdy and foul-mouthed, and they squabbled not a little over their partners. First and foremost each man wanted to dance with Pretty Lizzie; Long Potter's two daughters came next, and failing them their buxom mother proved a bone of contention; the non-successful ones, and their name was legion, having to dance with each other.

And dance they did with a will. Never before or since have I seen such energetic dancing as we used to have at those bull-dances of diggings days. As the evening advanced and the liquor began to take effect, disputes became more frequent, disputes that were as a rule, promptly settled outside by a round of fisticuffs; but perhaps the best hated man there was the trooper, who came in about nine o'clock, and monopolized Pretty Lizzie. He was a big, fair man, this trooper—a gentleman evidently, down on his luck, as many a gentleman was in those days, and as evidently he was in love with Lizzie and she was in love with him. Oh, the adoring glances she cast at him as they went down the room together at a mad gallop. He got drunk as night advanced, and before I left I was dimly conscious of a dark

corner where a sobbing woman was putting a pillow beneath the head of her insensible lover. Poor Pretty Lizzie, spite of it all, she married him; and ten years later I saw her again, the weary looking, draggled-tailed landlady of a wayside shanty, with half a dozen small children hanging on to her skirts and a drunken husband lolling in the bar. Poor Pretty Lizzie, she was worthy of a better fate.

I 'm afraid I must confess I don't remember much about the close of the evening. I wanted to dance with Lizzie, and when she would have none of me I consoled myself with the flowing bowl to such an extent that when by-and-by Dick, suggesting we should go home, took me by the arm and led me into the open air, I found the ground was rising up to meet me, and I remarked to my mate I thought that the moon must be getting old, she was so remarkably unsteady on her legs. I retired to my tent to wake up next morning with a splitting headache, as a pleasing reminiscence of the revel of the night before.

I am not a digger now. Long since I abandoned the pick and shovel for more lucrative employment—so long since that it is only occasionally I look back on my early days in the colony and my first Christmas on the diggings.

Oor Lang Hame

Peter Bruce was puzzled by a passenger who travelled from the Junction on a late October day, and spoke with a mixed accent. He would not be more than forty years of age, but his hair was grey, and his face bore the marks of unchangeable sorrow. Although he was not a working man, his clothes were brushed to the bone, and his bag could not contain many luxuries. There was not any doubt about his class, yet he did not seem willing to enter the third, but wandered up and down the train, as if looking for a lost carriage. As he passed beyond the van he appeared to have found what he was seeking, and Peter came upon him examining the old Kildrummie third, wherein Jamie Sou-tar had so often held forth, and which was now planted down on the side of the line as a storehouse for tools and lamps. The stranger walked round the forlorn remains and peered in at a window, as if to see the place where he or some one else he knew had sat.

“Ye ken the auld third,” said Peter, anxious to give a lead; “it 's been aff the rails for mair than twal years; it gies me a turn at times tae see it sittin' there like a freend that's fa'en back in the warld.”

As the stranger gave no sign, Peter attached himself to his door—under pretext of collecting the tickets—and dealt skilfully with the mystery. He went over the improvements in Kildrummie, enlarging on the new U. P. kirk and the extension of the Gasworks. When these stirring tales produced no effect, the conclusion was plain.

“It's a fell step tae Drumtochty, an' ye 'll be the better o' the dogcairt. Sandie 's still tae the fore, though he's failin' like's a'; wull a' tell the engine driver tae whistle for't?”

“No, I 'll walk... better folk than I have tramped that road... with loads, too.” And then, as he left the station, the unknown said, as if recollecting his native tongue, “Gude day, Peter; it is a comfort tae sae ae kent face aifter mony changes.”

Something hindered the question on Peter's lips, but he watched the slender figure—which seemed bent with an invisible burden—till it disappeared, and then the old man shook his head.

“It beats me tae pit a name on him, an' he didna want tae be askit; but whaeve he may be, he 's sair stricken. Yon's the saddest face 'at hes come up frae the Junction sin a' hoddit Flora Campbell in the second. An' a'm judgin' he 'ill be waur tae comfort.”

The road to Drumtochty, after it had thrown off Kildrummie, climbed a hill, and passed through an open country till it plunged into the pine woods. The wind was fresh, blowing down from the Grampians, with a suggestion of frost, and the ground was firm underfoot. The pungent scent of ripe turnips was in the air, mingled, as one passed a stackyard, with the smell of the newly gathered grain, whose scattered remains clung to the hedges. As the lonely man passed one homestead, a tramp was leaving the door, pursued with contempt.

“Awa wi' ye, or a'll louse the dog,” an honest woman was saying. “Gin ye were a puir helpless body a 'd gie ye meat an' drink, but an able-bodied man sud be ashamed tae beg. Hae ye nae speerit that ye wud hang upon ither fouk for yir livin'?”

The vagabond only bent his head and went on his way, but so keen was the housewife's tongue that it brought a faint flush of shame to his cheek. As soon as she had gone in again, and the two men were alone on the road, the one with the sad face gave some silver to the outcast.

“Don't thank me—begin again somewhere... I was a tramp myself once,” and he hurried on as one haunted by the past.

His pace slackened as he entered the pines, and the kindly shelter and the sweet fragrance seemed to give him peace. In the centre of the wood there was an open space, with a pool and a clump of gorse. He sat down and rested his head on his hands for a while; then he took two letters out of his pocket that were almost worn away with handling, and this was the first he read:

“Ye mind that the laist time we met wes in Drumtochty kirkyaird, an' that I said hard things tae ye aboot yir laziness and yir conduct tae yir grandmither. Weel, a 'm sorry for ma words this day, no that they werena true, for ye ken they were, but because a 've tae send waesome news tae ye, an' a' wush a kinder man hed been the writer.

“Ye ken that yir sister Lily gaed up tae London an' took a place. Weel, she hes served wi' sic faithfulness that she 'ill no be here tae welcome ye gin ye come back again. A' happened tae be in London at the time, and wes wi' Lily when she slippit awa, an' she bade me tell ye no tae lose hert, for ae body at least believed in ye, an' wes expeck in' ye tae turn oot weel.

“A' wush that were a', for it's eneuch for ye tae bear, gin ye be a man an' hae a memory. But tribbles aye rin in pairs. Yir grandmither kept up till the beerial wes ower, an' then she took tae her bed for a week. A 'll never be up again,' she said tae me, 'an' a 'll no be lang here.' We laid her aside Lily, an' she sent the same word tae ye wi' her last breath: 'Tell Chairlie a' wes thinkin' about him till the end, an' that a'm sure ma lassie's bairn 'ill come richt some day.'

“This letter 'ill gie ye a sair hert for mony a day, but ye wull coont the sairness a blessing an' no an ill. Never lat it slip frae yir mind that twa true weemen loved ye an' prayed for ye till the laist, deem' wi' yir name on their lips. Ye 'ill be a man yet, Chairlie.

“Dinna answer this letter—answer yon fond herts that luv an' pray for ye. Gin ye be ever in tribble, lat me ken. A' wes yir grand-mither's freend and Lily's freend; sae lang as a'm here, coont me yir freend for their sake.

“James Soutar.”

It was half an hour before he read the second letter.

“Dear Chairlie,—A 'm verra sober noo, an' canna rise; but gin ony medecine cud hae cured me, it wud hae been yir letter. A' thae years a've been sure ye were fechtin' yir battle, an' that some day news wud come o' yir victory.

“Man, ye've dune weel—a pairtner, wi' a hoose o' yir ain, an' sic an income. Ye aye hed brains, an' noo ye've turned them tae accoont. A' withdraw every word a' ca'd ye, for ye 're an honour noo tae Drumtochty. Gin they hed only been spared tae ken o' yir success!

“A 've divided the money amang yir sisters in Muirtown, and Doctor Davidson 'ill pit the lave intae a fund tae help puir laddies wi' their

education. Yir name 'ill never appear, but a 'm prood tae think o' yir leeberality, and mony will bless ye. Afore this reaches ye in America a 'll be awa, and ithers roond me are near their lang hame. Ye 'ill maybe tak a thocht o' veesiting the Glen some day, but a' doot the neeburs that githered in the kirkyaird 'ill no be here tae wush ye weel, as a' dae this day. A 'm glad a' lived tae get yir letter. God be wi' ye."

The letter dropped from his hand, and the exile looked into the far distance with something between a smile and a tear.

"They were gude men 'at githered ablow the beech-tree in the kirkyaird on a Sabbath mornin'," he said aloud, and the new accent had now lost itself altogether in an older tongue; "and there wesna a truer hert amang them a' than Jamie. Gin he hed been'spared tae gie me a shak o' his hand, a' wud hae been comforted; an' aifter him a' wud like a word,

"James Soutar."

Frae Drumsheugh.

A' wunner gin he be still tae the fore.

"Na, na," and his head fell on his chest, "it's no possible; o' a' the generation 'at condemned me, no ane 'ill be leevin' tae say forgiven. But a' cudna hae come hame suner—till a' hed redeemed masel."

He caught the sound of a cart from the Glen, and a sudden fear overcame him at the meet-of the first Drumtochty man. His first movement was to the shelter of the wood; then he lay down behind the gorse and watched the bend of the road. It was a double cart, laden with potatoes for Kildrummie station, and the very horses had a homely look; while the driver was singing in a deep, mellow voice, "Should auld acquaintance be forgot." The light was on his face, and the wanderer recognised him at once. They had been at school together, and were of the same age, but there was not a grey hair in young Burnbrae's beard, nor a line on his face.

As the cart passed, Grant watched the tram, and marked that the Christian name was in fresh paint.

“It 's James, no John, noo. Burnbrae hesna feenished his lease, an' a'm thinkin' Jean 'ill no hae lasted long aifter him. He wes a gude man, an' he hed gude sons.”

The cart was a mile on the road, and Burn-brae's song had long died into silence among the pines, before Grant rose from the ground and went on his way.

There is a certain point where the road from Kildrummie disentangles itself from the wood, and begins the descent to Tochty Bridge. Drumtochty exiles used to stand there for a space and rest their eyes on the Glen which they could now see, from the hills that made its western wall to the woods of Tochty that began below the parish kirk, and though each man might not be able to detect the old home, he had some landmark—a tree or a rise of the hill—to distinguish the spot where he was born, and if such were still his good fortune, where true hearts were waiting to bid him welcome. Two Drumtochty students returning in the spring with their honours might talk of learned studies and resume their debates coming through the wood, but as the trees thinned conversation languished, and then the lads would go over to the style. No man said aught unto his neighbour as they drank in the Glen, but when they turned and went down the hill, a change had come over them.

“Man, Dauvid,” Ross would say—with three medals to give to his mother, who had been all day making ready for his arrival, and was already watching the upland road—“far or near, ye 'ill never fin' a bonnier burn than the Tochty; see yonder the glisk o 't through the bridge as it whummels ower the stanes and shimmers in the evening licht.”

“An' Hillocks's haughs,” cried Baxter, who was supposed to think in Hebrew and had won a Fellowship for foreign travel, “are green an' sweet the nicht, wi' the bank o' birks ahint them, an' a' saw the hill abune yir hame, Jock, an' it wes glistenin' like the sea.”

Quite suddenly, at the sight of the Glen, and for the breath of it in their lungs, they had become Drumtochty again, to the names they had called one another in Domsie's school, and as they came to the bottom of the hill, they raced to see who first would reach the crest of the ancient bridge that might have been Marshal Wade's for its steepness, and then

were met on the other side by Hillocks, who gave them joyful greeting in name of the parish. But not even Hillocks, with all his blandishments, could wile them within doors that evening. John Ross saw his mother shading her eyes at the garden gate and wearying for the sight of his head above the hill, and already David Baxter seemed to hear his father's voice, "God bless ye, laddie; welcome hame, and weel dune." For the choice reward of a true man's work is not the applause of the street, which comes and goes, but the pride of them that love him.

What might have been so came upon this emigrant as he gazed upon the Glen, that the driver of the Kildrummie bread cart, a man quite below the average of Drumtochty intelligence, was struck by the hopelessness of his attitude, and refrained from a remark on the completion of harvest which he had been offering freely all day. They were threshing at Hillocks's farm that day, and across the river Grant saw the pleasant bustle in the stackyard and heard the hum of the mill. It used to be believed that Hillocks held a strategic position of such commanding power that no one had ever crossed that bridge without his supervision—except on Friday when he was in Muirtown—and so strong was the wayfarer's longing for some face of the former time, that he loitered opposite the barn door, in hopes that a battered hat, dating from the middle of the century and utilised at times for the protection of potatoes, might appear, and a voice be heard, "A 've seen a waur day, ye 'ill be gaein' up the Glen," merely as a preliminary to more searching investigation at what was the frontier of Drumtochty. Hillocks also must be dead, and as for the others, they were too busy with their work to give any heed to a stranger. A gust of wind catching up the chaff, whirled it across the yard and powdered his coat. The prodigal accepted the omen, and turned himself to the hill that went up to Mary's cottage.

He had planned to pass the place, and then from the footpath to the kirkyard to have looked down on the home of his boyhood, but he need not have taken precautions. No one was there to question or recognise him; Mary's little house was empty and forsaken. The thatch had fallen in with the weight of winter snows, the garden gate was lying on the walk, the scrap of ground once so carefully kept was overgrown with weeds. Grant opened the unlatched door—taking off his hat—and stood in the desolate

kitchen. He sat down on the edge of the box-bed no one had thought it worth while to remove, and covered his face while memory awoke. The fire again burned on the hearth, and was reflected from the dishes on the opposite wall; the table was spread for supper, and he saw his wooden bicker with the black horn spoon beside it; Mary sat in her deep old armchair, and stirred the porridge sputtering in the pot; a rosy-cheeked laddie curled in a heap at his grandmother's feet saw great marvels in the magic firelight.

“Get up, Chairlie, an' we 'ill tak oor supper, an' then ye'll feenish yir lessons. Domsie says ye hae the makin' o' a scholar, gin ye work hard eneuch, an' a' ken ye 'ill dae that for yir auld grannie's sake an' yir puir mither's, wunna ye, ma mannie?” but when her hand fell on his head, he rose suddenly and made for the other room, the “ben” of this humble home.

A little bit of carpet on the floor; four horsehair chairs, one with David and Goliath in crochet-work on its back; a brass fender that had often revealed to Mary the secret pride of the human heart; shells on the mantel-piece in which an inland laddie could hear the roar of the sea, with peacock's feathers also, and a spotted china dog which was an almost speaking likeness of the minister of Kildrummie; a mahogany chest of drawers—the chairs were only birch, but we can't have everything in this world—whereon lay the Family Bible and the *Pilgrim's Progress* and Rutherford's Letters, besides a box with views of the London Exhibition that were an endless joy. This was what rose before his eyes, in that empty place. Within the drawers were kept the Sabbath clothes, and in this room a laddie was dressed for kirk, after a searching and remorseless scrubbing in the “but,” and here he must sit motionless till it was time to start, while Mary, giving last touches to the fire and herself, maintained a running exhortation, “Gin ye brak that collar or rumple yir hair, peety ye, the 'ill be nae peppermint-drop for you in the sermon the day.” Here also an old woman whose hands were hard with work opened a secret place in those drawers, and gave a young man whose hands were white her last penny.

“Ye 'ill be carefu', Chairlie, an' a'll try tae send ye somethin' till ye can dae for yirsel, an', laddie, dinna forget... yer Bible nor yir hame, for we expect ye tae be a credit tae 's a'.” Have mercy, O God!

Within and without it was one desolation—full of bitter memories and silent reproaches—save in one corner, where a hardy rose-tree had held its own, and had opened the last flower of the year. With a tender, thankful heart, the repentant prodigal plucked its whiteness, and wrapped it in Jamie's letters.

Our kirkyard was' on a height facing the south, with the massy Tochty woods on one side and the manse on the other, while down below—a meadow between—the river ran, so that its sound could just be heard in clear weather. From its vantage one could see the Ochils as well as one of the Lomonds, and was only cut off from the Sidlaws by Tochty woods. It was not well kept, after the town's fashion, having no walk, save the broad track to the kirk door and a narrower one to the manse garden; no cypresses or weeping willows or beds of flowers—only four or five big trees had flung their kindly shadow for generations over the place where the fathers of the Glen took their long rest; no urns, obelisks, broken columns, and such-like pagan monuments, but grey, worn stones, some lying flat, some standing on end, with a name and date, and two crosses, one to George Howe, the Glen's lost scholar, and the other to William Maclure, who had loved the Glen even unto death. There was also a marble tablet let into the eastern wall of the church, where the first ray of the sun fell,

Sacred to the memory of Rev. Alexander
Davidson, D.D.,

for fifty years the faithful Minister of
Drumtochty.

Beside the beech-tree where the fathers used to stand were two stones. The newer had on it simply "Lachlan Campbell," for it was Lachlan's wish that he should be buried with Drumtochty. "They are good people, Flora," he said the day he died, "and they dealt kindly by us in the time of our trouble." But the older was covered with names, and these were the last, which filled up the space and left no space for another:

Lily Grant, aged 23, a servant lass.

Mary Robertson, aged 75.

Charlie knelt on the turf before the stone, and, taking off his hat, prayed God his sins might be forgiven, and that one day he might meet the trusting hearts that had not despaired of his return.

He rose uncomforted, however, and stood beneath the beech, where Jamie Soutar had once lashed him for his unmanliness. Looking down, he saw the fields swept clean of grain; he heard the sad murmur of the water, that laughed at the shortness of life; withered leaves fell at his feet, and the October sun faded from the kirkyard. A chill struck to his heart, because there was none to receive his repentance, none to stretch out to him a human hand, and bid him go in peace.

He was minded to creep away softly and leave Drumtochty forever—his heart full of a vain regret—when he found there was another mourner in the kirkyard. An old man was carefully cleaning the letters of Maclure's name, and he heard him saying aloud:

“It disna maitter though, for he 's in oor herts an' canna be forgotten. Ye 've hed a gude sleep, Weelum, an' sair ye needed it. Some o's 'ill no be lang o' followin' ye noo.”

Then he went over to Geordie's grave and read a fresh inscription:

Margaret Howe, his mother.

“They're thegither noo,” he said softly, “an' content. O Marget, Marget,” and the voice was full of tears, “there wes nane like ye.”

As he turned to go, the two men met, and Grant recognised Drumsheugh.

“Gude nicht, Drumsheugh,” he said; “a' ken yir face, though ye hae forgotten mine, an' nae doot it 's sair changed wi' sin and sorrow.”

“Are ye Drumtochty?” and Drumsheugh examined Charlie closely; “there wes a day when a' cud hae pit his name on every man that cam oot o' the Glen in ma time, but ma een are no what they were, an' a'm failin' fast masel.”

“Ay, a' wes born an' bred in Drumtochty, though the parish micht weel be ashamed o' ma name. A' cam tae visit ma dead, an' a'm gaein' awa

for gude. Naebody hes seen me but yersel, an' a 'll no deny a 'm pleased tae get a sicht o' yir face."

"Ye're no," and then Drumsheugh held out his hand, "Chairlie Grant. Man, a'm gled a' cam intae the kirkyaird this day, and wes here tae meet ye. A' bid ye welcome for the Glen and them 'at's gane."

"A'm no worthy, Drumsheugh, either o' them 'at's livin' or them 'at's dead, but Gude kens a've repentit, an' the grip o' an honest hand, an' maist o' a' yir ain, 'ill gie me hert for the days tae come."

"Nane o's is worthy o' some of them 'at's lyin' here, Chairlie, naither you nor me, but it's no them 'at will be hardest on oor fauts. Na, na, they ken an' luve ower muckle, an' a 'm houpin' that's sae... wi' the Almichty.

"Man, Chairlie, it did me gude tae hear that ye hed played the man in Ameriky, and that ye didna forget the puir laddies o' Drumtochty. Ay, Jamie telt me afore he deed, an' prood he wes aboot ye. 'Lily's gotten her wish,' he said; 'a' kent she wud.'

"He wes sure ye wud veesit the auld Glen some day, an' wes feared there wudna be a freend tae gie ye a word. Ye wes tae slip awa tae Muirtown the nicht withoot a word, an' nane o's tae ken ye hed been here? Na, na, gin there be a cauld hearth in yir auld hame, there 's a warm corner in ma hoose for Lily's brither," and so they went home together.

When they arrived, Saunders was finishing the last stack, and broke suddenly into speech.

"Ye thocht, Drumsheugh, we would never get that late puckle in, but here it is, safe and soond, an' a'll warrant it 'ill buke (bulk) as weel as ony in the threshin'."

"Ye're richt, Saunders, and a bonnie stack it maks;" and then Charlie Grant went in with Drumsheugh to the warmth and the kindly light, while the darkness fell upon the empty harvest field, from which the last sheaf had been safely garnered.

A Bit of Shore Life

I often think of a boy with whom I made friends last summer, during some idle, pleasant days that I spent by the sea. I was almost always out of doors, and I used to watch the boats go out and come in; and I had a hearty liking for the good-natured fishermen, who were lazy and busy by turns, who waited for the wind to change, and waited for the tide to turn, and waited for the fish to bite, and were always ready to gossip about the weather, and the fish, and the wonderful events that had befallen them and their friends.

Georgie was the only boy of whom I ever saw much at the shore. The few young people there were all went to school through the hot summer days at a little weather-beaten schoolhouse a mile or two inland. There were few houses to be seen, at any rate, and Georgie's house was the only one so close to the water. He looked already nothing but a fisherman; his clothes were covered with an oil-skin suit, which had evidently been awkwardly cut down for him from one of his father's, of whom he was a curious little likeness. I could hardly believe that he was twelve years old, he was so stunted and small; yet he was a strong little fellow; his hands were horny and hard from handling the clumsy oars, and his face was so brown and dry from the hot sun and chilly spray, that he looked even older when one came close to him. The first time I saw him was one evening just at night-fall. I was sitting on the pebbles, and he came down from the fish-house with some lobster-nets, and a bucket with some pieces of fish in it for bait, and put them into the stern of one of the boats which lay just at the edge of the rising tide. He looked at the clouds over the sea, and at the open sky overhead, in an old, wise way, and then, as if satisfied with the weather, began to push off his boat. It dragged on the pebbles; it was a heavy thing, and he could not get it far enough out to be floated by the low waves, so I went down to help him. He looked amazed that a girl should have thought of it, and as if he wished to ask me what good I supposed I could do, though I was twice his size. But the boat grated and slid down toward the sand, and I gave her a last push as the boy perched with one knee on her gunwale and let the other foot drag in the water for a minute. He was afloat after all; and he took the oars, and pulled manfully out toward the moorings, where the

whale-boats and a sail-boat or two were swaying about in the wind, which was rising a little since the sun had set. He did not say a word to me, or I to him. I watched him go out into the twilight,—such a little fellow, between those two great oars! But the boat could not drift or loiter with his steady stroke, and out he went, until I could only see the boat at last, lifting and sinking on the waves beyond the reef outside the moorings. I asked one of the fishermen whom I knew very well, "Who is that little fellow? Ought he to be out by himself, it is growing dark so fast?"

"Why, that's *Georgie!*" said my friend, with his grim smile. "Bless ye! he's like a duck; ye can't drown him. He won't be in until ten o'clock, like's not. He'll go way out to the far ledges when the tide covers them too deep where he is now. Lobsters he's after."

"Whose boy is he?" said I.

"Why, Andrer's, up here to the fish-house. *She's* dead, and him and the boy get along together somehow or 'nother. They've both got something saved up, and Andrer's a clever fellow; took it very hard, losing of his wife. I was telling of him the other day: 'Andrer,' says I, 'ye ought to look up somebody or 'nother, and not live this way. There's plenty o' smart, stirring women that would mend ye up, and cook for ye, and do well by ye.'—'No,' says he; 'I've hed my wife, and I've lost her.'—'Well, now,' says I, 'ye've shown respect, and there's the boy a-growin' up, and if either of you was took sick, why, here ye be.'—'Yes,' says he, 'here I be, sure enough;' and he drawed a long breath, 's if he felt bad; so that's all I said. But it's no way for a man to get along, and he ought to think of the boy. He owned a good house about half a mile up the road; but he moved right down here after she died, and his cousin took it, and it burnt up in the winter. Four year ago that was. I was down to the Georges Banks."

Some other men came down toward the water, and took a boat that was waiting, already fitted out with a trawl coiled in two tubs, and some hand-lines and bait for rock-cod and haddock, and my friend joined them; they were going out for a night's fishing. I watched them hoist the little sprit-sail, and drift a little until they caught the wind, and then I looked again for Georgie, whose boat was like a black spot on the water.

I knew him better soon after that. I used to go out with him for lobsters, or to catch cunners, and it was strange that he never had any cronies, and would hardly speak to the other children. He was very shy; but he had put all his heart into his work,—a man's hard work, which he had taken from choice. His father was kind to him; but he had a sorry home, and no mother,—the brave, fearless, steady little soul!

He looked forward to going one day (I hope that day has already dawned) to see the shipyards at a large seaport some twenty miles away. His face lit up when he told me of it, as some other child's would who had been promised a day in fairy-land. And he confided to me that he thought he should go to the Banks that coming winter. "But it's so cold!" said I: "should you really like it?"—"Cold!" said Georgie. "Ho! rest of the men never froze." That was it,—the "rest of the men;" and he would work until he dropped, or tend a line until his fingers froze, for the sake of that likeness,—the grave, slow little man, who has so much business with the sea, and who trusts himself with touching confidence to its treacherous keeping and favor.

Andrew West, Georgie's father, was almost as silent as his son at first, but it was not long before we were very good friends, and I went out with him at four o'clock one morning, to see him set his trawl. I remember there was a thin mist over the sea, and the air was almost chilly; but, as the sun came up, it changed the color of every thing to the most exquisite pink,—the smooth, slow waves, and the mist that blew over them as if it were a cloud that had fallen down out of the sky. The world just then was like the hollow of a great pink sea-shell; and we could only hear the noise of it, the dull sound of the waves among the outer ledges.

We had to drift about for an hour or two when the trawl was set; and after a while the fog shut down again gray and close, so we could not see either the sun or the shore. We were a little more than four miles out, and we had put out more than half a mile of lines. It is very interesting to see the different fish that come up on the hooks,—worthless sculpin and dog-fish, and good rock-cod and haddock, and curious stray creatures which often even the fisherman do not know. We had capital good luck that morning, and Georgie and Andrew and I were all pleased. I had a hand-line, and was fishing part of the time, and Georgie thought very well of me when

he found I was not afraid of a big fish, and, besides that, I had taken the oars while he tended the sail, though there was hardly wind enough to make it worth his while. It was about eight o'clock when we came in, and there was a horse and wagon standing near the landing; and we saw a woman come out of Andrew's little house. "There's your aunt Hannah a'ready," said he to Georgie; and presently she came down the pebbles to meet the boat, looking at me with much wonder as I jumped ashore.

"I sh'd think you might a' cleaned up your boat, Andrer, if you was going to take ladies out," said she graciously. And the fisherman rejoined, that perhaps she would have thought it looked better when it went out than it did then; he never had got a better fare o' fish unless the trawls had been set over night.

There certainly had been a good haul; and, when Andrew carefully put those I had caught with the hand-line by themselves, I asked his sister to take them, if she liked. "Bless you!" said she, much pleased, "we couldn't eat one o' them big rock-cod in a week. I'll take a little ha'dick, if Andrer 'll pick me one out."

She was a tall, large woman, who had a direct, business-like manner,—what the country people would call a master smart woman, or a regular driver,—and I liked her. She said something to her brother about some clothes she had been making for him or for Georgie, and I went off to the house where I was boarding for my breakfast. I was hungry enough, since I had had only a hurried lunch a good while before sunrise. I came back late in the morning, and found that Georgie's aunt was just going away. I think my friends must have spoken well of me, for she came out to meet me as I nodded in going by, and said, "I suppose ye drive about some? We should be pleased to have ye come up to see us. We live right 'mongst the woods; it ain't much of a place to ask anybody to." And she added that she might have done a good deal better for herself to have staid off. But there! they had the place, and she supposed she and Cynthy had done as well there as anywhere. Cynthy—well, she wasn't one of your pushing kind; but I should have some flowers, and perhaps it would be a change for me. I thanked her, and said I should be delighted to go. Georgie and I would make her a call together some afternoon when he wasn't busy; and Georgie actually smiled when I looked at him, and said, "All right," and then hurried

off down the shore. "Ain't he an odd boy?" said Miss Hannah West, with a shadow of disapproval in her face. "But he's just like his father and grandfather before him; you wouldn't think they had no gratitude nor feelin', but I s'pose they have. They used to say my father never'd forgit a friend, or forgive an enemy. Well, I'm much obliged to you, I'm sure, for taking an interest in the boy." I said I liked him; I only wished I could do something for him. And then she said good-day, and drove off. I felt as if we were already good friends. "I'm much obliged for the fish," she turned round to say to me again, as she went away.

One morning, not very long afterward, I asked Georgie if he could possibly leave his business that afternoon, and he gravely answered me that he could get away just as well as not, for the tide would not be right for lobsters until after supper.

"I should like to go up and see your aunt," said I. "You know she asked me to come the other day when she was here."

"I'd like to go," said Georgie sedately. "Father was going up this week; but the mackerel struck in, and we couldn't leave. But it's better'n six miles up there."

"That's not far," said I. "I'm going to have Captain Donnell's horse and wagon;" and Georgie looked much interested.

I wondered if he would wear his oil-skin suit; but I was much amazed, and my heart was touched, at seeing how hard he had tried to put himself in trim for the visit. He had on his best jacket and trousers (which might have been most boys' worst), and a clean calico shirt; and he had scrubbed his freckled, honest little face and his hard little hands, until they were as clean as possible; and either he or his father had cut his hair. I should think it had been done with a knife, and it looked as if a rat had gnawed it. He had such a holiday air! He really looked very well; but still, if I were to have a picture of Georgie, it should be in the oil-skin fishing-suit. He had gone out to his box, which was anchored a little way out in the cove, and had chosen two fine lobsters which he had tied together with a bit of fish-line. They were lazily moving their claws and feelers; and his father, who had come in with his boat not long before, added from his fare of fish three plump mackerel.

"They're always glad to get new fish," said he. "The girls can't abide a fish that's corned, and I haven't had a chance to send 'em up any mackerel before. Ye see, they live on a cross-road, and the fish-carts don't go by." And I told him I was very glad to carry them, or any thing else he would like to send. "Mind your manners, now, Georgie," said he, "and don't be forrard. You might split up some kindlin's for y'r aunts, and do whatever they want of ye. Boys ain't made just to look at, so ye be handy, will ye?" And Georgie nodded solemnly. They seemed very fond of each other, and I looked back some time afterward to see the fisherman still standing there to watch his boy. He was used to his being out at sea alone for hours; but this might be a great risk to let him go off inland to stay all the afternoon.

The road crossed the salt-marshes for the first mile, and, when we had struck the higher land, we soon entered the pine-woods, which cover a great part of that country. It had been raining in the morning for a little while; and the trunks of the trees were still damp, and the underbrush was shining wet, and sent out a sweet, fresh smell. I spoke of it, and Georgie told me that sometimes this fragrance blew far out to sea, and then you knew the wind was north-west.

"There's the big pine you sight Minister's Ledge by," said he, "when that comes in range over the white schoolhouse, about two miles out."

The lobsters were clashing their pegged claws together in the back of the wagon, and Georgie sometimes looked over at them to be sure they were all right. Of course I had given him the reins when we first started, and he was delighted because we saw some squirrels, and even a rabbit, which scurried across the road as if I had been a fiery dragon, and Georgie something worse.

We presently came in sight of a house close by the road,—an old-looking place, with a ledgy, forlorn field stretching out behind it toward some low woods. There were high white-birch poles holding up thick tangles of hop-vines, and at the side there were sunflowers straggling about as if they had come up from seed scattered by the wind. Some of them were close together, as if they were whispering to each other; and their big,

yellow faces were all turned toward the front of the house, where people were already collected as if there were a funeral.

"It's the auction," said Georgie with great satisfaction. "I heard 'em talking about it down at the shore this morning. There's 'Lisha Downs now. He started off just before we did. That's his fish-cart over by the well."

"What is going to be sold?" said I.

"All the stuff," said Georgie, as if he were much pleased. "She's going off up to Boston with her son."

"I think we had better stop," said I, for I saw Mrs. 'Lisha Downs, who was one of my acquaintances at the shore, and I wished to see what was going on, besides giving Georgie a chance at the festivities. So we tied the horse, and went toward the house, and I found several people whom I knew a little. Mrs. Downs shook hands with me as formally as if we had not talked for some time as I went by her house to the shore, just after breakfast. She presented me to several of her friends with whom she had been talking as I came up. "Let me make you acquainted," she said; and every time I bowed she bowed too, unconsciously, and seemed a little ill at ease and embarrassed, but luckily the ceremony was soon over. "I thought I would stop for a few minutes," said I by way of apology. "I didn't know why the people were here until Georgie told me."

"She's going to move up to Boston 'long of her son," said one of the women, who looked very pleasant and very tired. "I think myself it's a bad plan to pull old folks up by the roots. There's a niece o' hers that would have been glad to stop with her, and do for the old lady. But John, he's very high-handed, and wants it his way, and he says his mother sha'n't live in no such a place as this. He makes a sight o' money. He's got out a patent, and they say he's just bought a new house that cost him eleven thousand dollars. But old Mis' Wallis, she's wonted here; and she was telling of me yesterday she was only going to please John. He says he wants her up there, where she'll be more comfortable, and see something."

"He means well," said another woman whom I did not know; "but folks about here never thought no great of his judgment. He's put up some splendid stones in the burying-lot to his father and his sister Miranda that

died. I used to go to school 'long of Miranda. She'd have been pleased to go to Boston; she was that kind. But there! mother was saying last night, what if his business took a turn, and he lost every thing! Mother's took it dreadfully to heart; she and Mis' Wallis was always mates as long ago as they can recollect."

It was evident that the old widow was both pitied and envied by her friends on account of her bettered fortunes, and they came up to speak to her with more or less seriousness, as befitted the occasion. She looked at me with great curiosity, but Mrs. Downs told her who I was, and I had a sudden instinct to say how sorry I was for her, but I was afraid it might appear intrusive on so short an acquaintance. She was a thin old soul who looked as if she had had a good deal of trouble in her day, and as if she had been very poor and very anxious. "Yes," said she to some one who had come from a distance, "it does come hard to go off. Home is home, and I seem to hate to sell off my things; but I suppose they would look queer up to Boston. John Bays says I won't have no idea of the house until I see it;" and she looked proud and important for a minute, but, as some one brought an old chair out at the door, her face fell again. "Oh, dear!" said she, "I should like to keep that! it belonged to my mother. It's most wore out anyway. I guess I'll let somebody keep it for me;" and she hurried off despairingly to find her son, while we went into the house.

There is so little to interest the people who live on those quiet, secluded farms, that an event of this kind gives great pleasure. I know they have not done talking yet about the sale, of the bargains that were made, or the goods that brought more than they were worth. And then the women had the chance of going all about the house, and committing every detail of its furnishings to their tenacious memories. It is a curiosity one grows more and more willing to pardon, for there is so little to amuse them in every-day life. I wonder if any one has not often been struck, as I have, by the sadness and hopelessness which seems to overshadow many of the people who live on the lonely farms in the outskirts of small New-England villages. It is most noticeable among the elderly women. Their talk is very cheerless, and they have a morbid interest in sicknesses and deaths; they tell each other long stories about such things; they are very forlorn; they dwell persistently upon any troubles which they have; and their petty disputes with each other

have a tragic hold upon their thoughts, sometimes being handed down from one generation to the next. Is it because their world is so small, and life affords so little amusement and pleasure, and is at best such a dreary round of the dullest housekeeping? There is a lack of real merriment, and the fun is an odd, rough way of joking; it is a stupid, heavy sort of fun, though there is much of a certain quaint humor, and once in a while a flash of wit. I came upon a short, stout old sister in one room, making all the effort she possibly could to see what was on the upper shelves of a closet. We were the only persons there, and she looked longingly at a convenient chair, and I know she wished I would go away. But my heart suddenly went out toward an old dark-green Delft bowl which I saw, and I asked her if she would be kind enough to let me take it, as if I thought she were there for the purpose. "I'll bring you a chair," said I; and she said, "Certain, dear." And I helped her up, and I'm sure she had the good look she had coveted while I took the bowl to the window. It was badly cracked, and had been mended with putty; but the rich, dull color of it was exquisite. One often comes across a beautiful old stray bit of china in such a place as this, and I imagined it filled with apple-blossoms or wild roses. Mrs. Wallis wished to give it to me, she said it wasn't good for any thing; and, finding she did not care for it, I bought it; and now it is perched high in my room, with the cracks discreetly turned to the wall. "Seems to me she never had thrown away nothing," said my friend, whom I found still standing on the chair when I came back. "Here's some pieces of a pitcher: I wonder when she broke it! I've heard her say it was one her grandmother give her, though. The old lady bought it to a vandoo down at old Mis' Walton Peters's after she died, so Mis' Wallis said. I guess I'll speak to her, and see if she wants every thing sold that's here."

There was a very great pathos to me about this old home. It must have been a hard place to get a living in, both for men and women, with its wretched farming-land, and the house itself so cold and thin and worn out. I could understand that the son was in a hurry to get his mother away from it. I was sure that the boyhood he had spent there must have been uncomfortable, and that he did not look back to it with much pleasure. There is an immense contrast between even a moderately comfortable city house and such a place as this. No wonder that he remembered the bitter cold mornings, the frost and chill, and the dark, and the hard work, and wished his mother to leave them all behind, as he had done! He did not care

for the few plain bits of furniture; why should he? and he had been away so long, that he had lost his interest in the neighbors. Perhaps this might come back to him again as he grew older; but now he moved about among them, in his handsome but somewhat flashy clothes, with a look that told me he felt conscious of his superior station in life. I did not altogether like his looks, though somebody said admiringly, as he went by, "They say he's worth as much as thirty thousand dollars a'ready. He's smart as a whip." But, while I did not wonder at the son's wishing his mother to go away, I also did not wonder at her being unwilling to leave the dull little house where she had spent so much of her life. I was afraid no other house in the world would ever seem like home to her: she was a part of the old place; she had worn the doors smooth by the touch of her hands, and she had scrubbed the floors, and walked over them, until the knots stood up high in the pine boards. The old clock had been unscrewed from the wall, and stood on a table; and when I heard its loud and anxious tick, my first thought was one of pity for the poor thing, for fear it might be homesick, like its mistress. When I went out again, I was very sorry for old Mrs. Wallis; she looked so worried and excited, and as if this new turn of affairs in her life was too strange and unnatural; it bewildered her, and she could not understand it; she only knew every thing was going to be different.

Georgie was by himself, as usual, looking grave and intent. He had gone aloft on the wheel of a clumsy great ox-cart in which some of the men had come to the auction, and he was looking over people's heads, and seeing every thing that was sold. I saw he was not ready to come away, so I was not in a hurry. I heard Mrs. Wallis say to one of her friends, "You just go in and take that rug with the flowers on't, and go and put it in your wagon. It's right beside my chist that's packed ready to go. John told me to give away any thing I had a mind to. He don't care nothing about the money. I hooked that rug four year ago; it's most new; the red of the roses was made out of a dress of Miranda's. I kept it a good while after she died; but it was no use to let it lay. I've given a good deal to my sister Stiles: she was over here helping me yesterday. There! it's all come upon me so sudden! I s'pose I shall wish, after I get away, that I had done things different; but, after I knew the farm was goin' to be sold, I didn't seem to realize I was goin' to break up, until John came, day before yesterday."

She was very friendly with me, when I said I should think she would be sorry to go away; but she seemed glad to find I had been in Boston a great deal, and that I was not at all unhappy there. "But I suppose you have folks there," said she, "though I never supposed they was so sociable as they be here, and I ain't one that's easy to make acquaintance. It's different with young folks; and then in case o'sickness I should hate to have strange folks round me. It seems as if I never set so much by the old place as I do now I'm goin' away. I used to wish 'he' would sell, and move over to the Port, it was such hard work getting along when the child'n was small. And there's one of my boys that run away to sea, and never was heard from. I've always thought he might come back, though everybody give him up years ago. I can't help thinking what if he should come back, and find I wa'n't here! There! I'm glad to please John: he sets everything by me, and I s'pose he thinks he's going to make a spry young woman of me. Well, it's natural. Every thing looks fair to him, and he thinks he can have the world just as he wants it; but *I* know it's a world o' change,—a world o' change and loss. And, you see, I shall have to go to a strange meetin' up there.—Why, Mis' Sands! I am pleased to see you. How did you get word?" And then Mrs. Wallis made another careful apology for moving away. She seemed to be so afraid some one would think she had not been satisfied with the neighborhood.

The auctioneer was a disagreeable-looking man, with a most unpleasant voice, which gave me a sense of discomfort, the little old house and its surroundings seemed so grave and silent and lonely. It was like having all the noise and confusion on a Sunday. The house was so shut in by the trees, that the only outlook to the world beyond was a narrow gap in the pines, through which one could see the sea, bright, blue and warm with sunshine, that summer day.

There was something wistful about the place, as there must have been about the people who had lived there; yet, hungry and unsatisfied as her life might have been in many ways, the poor old woman dreaded the change.

The thought flashed through my mind that we all have more or less of this same feeling about leaving this world for a better one. We have the certainty that we shall be a great deal happier in heaven; but we cling

despairingly to the familiar things of this life. God pity the people who find it so hard to believe what he says, and who are afraid to die, and are afraid of the things they do not understand! I kept thinking over and over of what Mrs. Wallis had said: 'A world of change and loss!' What should we do if we did not have God's love to make up for it, and if we did not know something of heaven already?

It seemed very doleful that everybody should look on the dark side of the Widow Wallis's flitting, and I tried to suggest to her some of the pleasures and advantages of it, once when I had a chance. And indeed she was proud enough to be going away with her rich son; it was not like selling her goods because she was too poor to keep the old home any longer. I hoped the son would always be prosperous, and that the son's wife would always be kind, and not be ashamed of her, or think she was in the way. But I am afraid it may be a somewhat uneasy idleness, and that there will not be much beside her knitting-work to remind her of the old routine. She will even miss going back and forward from the old well in storm and sunshine; she will miss looking after the chickens, and her slow walks about the little place, or out to a neighbor's for a bit of gossip, with the old brown checked handkerchief over her head; and when the few homely, faithful old flowers come up next year by the doorstep, there will be nobody to care any thing about them.

I said good-by, and got into the wagon, and Georgie clambered in after me with a look of great importance, and we drove away. He was very talkative; the unusual excitement of the day was not without its effect. He had a good deal to tell me about the people I had seen, though I had to ask a good many questions.

"Who was the thin old fellow, with the black coat, faded yellow-green on the shoulders, who was talking to Skipper Downs about the dog-fish?"

"That's old Cap'n Abiah Lane," said Georgie; "lives over toward Little Beach,—him that was cast away in the fog in a dory down to the Banks once; like to have starved to death before he got picked up. I've heard him tell all about it. Don't look as if he'd ever had enough to eat since!" said the boy grimly. "He used to come over a good deal last winter,

and go out after cod 'long o' father and me. His boats all went adrift in the big storm in November, and he never heard nothing about 'em; guess they got stove against the rocks."

We had still more than three miles to drive over a lonely part of the road, where there was scarcely a house, and where the woods had been cut off more or less, so there was nothing to be seen but the uneven ground, which was not fit for even a pasture yet. But it was not without a beauty of its own; for the little hills and hollows were covered thick with brakes and ferns and bushes, and in the swamps the cat-tails and all the rushes were growing in stiff and stately ranks, so green and tall; while the birds flew up, or skimmed across them as we went by. It was like a town of birds, there were so many. It is strange how one is always coming upon families and neighborhoods of wild creatures in the unsettled country places; it is so much like one's going on longer journeys about the world, and finding town after town with its own interests, each so sufficient for itself.

We struck the edge of the farming-land again, after a while, and I saw three great pines that had been born to good luck in this world, since they had sprouted in good soil, and had been left to grow as fast as they pleased. They lifted their heads proudly against the blue sky, these rich trees, and I admired them as much as they could have expected. They must have been a landmark for many miles to the westward, for they grew on high land, and they could pity, from a distance, any number of their poor relations who were just able to keep body and soul together, and had grown up thin and hungry in crowded woods. But, though their lower branches might snap and crackle at a touch, their tops were brave and green, and they kept up appearances, at any rate; these poorer pines.

Georgie pointed out his aunts' house to me, after a while. It was not half so forlorn-looking as the others, for there were so many flowers in bloom about it of the gayest kind, and a little yellow-and-white dog came down the road to bark at us; but his manner was such that it seemed like an unusually cordial welcome rather than an indignant repulse. I noticed four jolly old apple-trees near by, which looked as if they might be the last of a once flourishing orchard. They were standing in a row, in exactly the same position, with their heads thrown gayly back, as if they were all dancing in an old-fashioned reel; and, after the forward and back, one might expect

them to turn partners gallantly. I laughed aloud when I caught sight of them: there was something very funny in their looks, so jovial and whole-hearted, with a sober, cheerful pleasure, as if they gave their whole minds to it. It was like some old gentlemen and ladies who catch the spirit of the thing, and dance with the rest at a Christmas party.

Miss Hannah West first looked out of the window, and then came to meet us, looking as if she were glad to see us. Georgie had nothing whatever to say; but, after I had followed his aunt into the house, he began to work like a beaver at once, as if it were any thing but a friendly visit that could be given up to such trifles as conversation, or as if he were any thing but a boy. He brought the fish and lobsters into the outer kitchen, though I was afraid our loitering at the auction must have cost them their first freshness; and then he carried the axe to the wood-pile, and began to chop up the small white-pine sticks and brush which form the summer fire-wood at the farm-houses,—crow-sticks and underbrush, a good deal of it,—but it makes a hot little blaze while it lasts.

I had not seen Miss Cynthia West, the younger sister, before, and I found the two women very unlike. Miss Hannah was evidently the capable business-member of the household, and she had a loud voice, and went about as if she were in a hurry. Poor Cynthia! I saw at first that she was one of the faded-looking country-women who have a hard time, and who, if they had grown up in the midst of a more luxurious way of living, would have been frail and delicate and refined, and entirely lady-like. But, as it was, she was somewhat in the shadow of her sister, and felt as if she were not of very much use or consequence in the world, I have no doubt. She showed me some pretty picture-frames she had made out of pine-cones and hemlock-cones and alder-burs; but her chief glory and pride was a silly little model of a house, in perforated card-board, which she had cut and worked after a pattern that came in a magazine. It must have cost her a great deal of work; but it partly satisfied her great longing for pretty things, and for the daintiness and art that she had an instinct toward, and never had known. It stood on the best-room table, with a few books, which I suppose she had read over and over again; and in the room, beside, were green paper curtains with a landscape on the outside, and some chairs ranged stiffly against the walls, some shells, and an ostrich's egg, with a ship drawn on it,

on the mantel-shelf, and ever so many rugs on the floor, of most ambitious designs, which they had made in winter. I know the making of them had been a great pleasure to Miss Cynthia, and I was sure it was she who had taken care of the garden, and was always at much pains to get seeds and slips in the spring.

She told me how much they had wished that Georgie had come to live with them after his mother died. It would have been very handy for them to have him in winter too; but it was no use trying to get him away from his father; and neither of them were contented if they were out of sight of the sea. "He's a dreadful odd boy, and so old for his years. Hannah, she says he's older now than I be," and she blushed a little as she looked up at me; while for a moment the tears came into my eyes, as I thought of this poor, plain woman, who had such a capacity for enjoyment, and whose life had been so dull, and far apart from the pleasures and satisfactions which had made so much of my own life. It seemed to me as if I had had a great deal more than I deserved, while this poor soul was almost beggared. I seemed to know all about her life in a flash, and pitied her from the bottom of my heart. Yet I suppose she would not have changed places with me for any thing, or with anybody else, for that matter.

Miss Cynthia had a good deal to say about her mother, who had been a schoolmate of Mrs. Wallis's—I had been telling them what I could about the auction. She told me that she had died the spring before, and said how much they missed her; and Hannah broke in upon her regrets in her brusque, downright way: "I should have liked to kep' her if she'd lived to be a hundred, but I don't wish her back. She'd had considerable many strokes, and she couldn't help herself much of any. She'd got to be rising eighty, and her mind was a good deal broke," she added conclusively, after a short silence; while Cynthia looked sorrowfully out of the window, and we heard the sound of Georgie's axe at the other side of the house, and the wild, sweet whistle of a bird that flew overhead. I suppose one of the sisters was just as sorry as the other in reality.

"Now I want you and Georgie to stop and have some tea. I'll get it good and early," said Hannah, starting suddenly from her chair, and beginning to bustle about again, after she had asked me about some people at home whom she knew. "Cynthy! Perhaps she'd like to walk round out

doors a spell. It's breezing up, and it'll be cooler than it is in the house.— No: you needn't think I shall be put out by your stopping; but you'll have to take us just as we be. Georgie always calculates to stop when he comes up. I guess he's made off for the woods. I see him go across the lot a few minutes ago."

So Cynthia put on a discouraged-looking gingham sun-bonnet, which drooped over her face, and gave her a more appealing look than ever, and we went over to the pine-woods, which were beautiful that day. She showed me a little waterfall made by a brook that came over a high ledge of rock covered with moss, and here and there tufts of fresh green ferns. It grew late in the afternoon, and it was pleasant there in the shade, with the noise of the brook and the wind in the pines, that sounded like the sea. The wood-thrushes began to sing,—and who could have better music?

Miss Cynthia told me that it always made her think of once when she was a little girl to hear the thrushes. She had run away, and fallen into the ma'sh; and her mother had sent her to bed quick as she got home, though it was only four o'clock. And she was so ashamed, because there was company there,—some of her father's folks from over to Eliot; and then she heard the thrushes begin to call after a while, and she thought they were talking about her, and they knew she had been whipped and sent to bed. "I'd been gone all day since morning. I had a great way of straying off in the woods," said she. "I suppose mother was put to it when she see me coming in, all bog-mud, right before the company."

We came by my friends, the apple-trees, on our return, and I saw a row of old-fashioned square bee-hives near them, which I had not noticed before. Miss Cynthia told me that the bee money was always hers; but she lost a good many swarms on account of the woods being so near, and they had a trick of swarming Sundays, after she'd gone to meeting; and, besides, the miller-bugs spoilt 'em; and some years they didn't make enough honey to live on, so she didn't get any at all. I saw some bits of black cloth fluttering over the little doors where the bees went in and out, and the sight touched me strangely. I did not know that the old custom still lingered of putting the hives in mourning, and telling the bees when there had been a death in the family, so they would not fly away. I said, half to myself, a line or two from Whittier's poem, which I always thought one of the loveliest in

the world, and this seemed almost the realization of it. Miss Cynthia asked me wistfully, "Is that in a book?" I told her yes, and that she should have it next time I came up, or had a chance of sending it. "I've seen a good many pieces of poetry that Mr. Whittier wrote," said she. "I've got some that I cut out of the paper a good while ago. I think every thing of 'em."

"I put the black on the hives myself," said she. "It was for mother, you know. She did it when father died. But when my brother was lost, we didn't, because we never knew just when it was; the schooner was missing, and it was a good while before they give her up."

"I wish we had some neighbors in sight," said she once. "I'd like to see a light when I look out after dark. Now, at my aunt's, over to Eliot, the house stands high, and when it's coming dark you can see all the folks lighting up. It seems real sociable."

We lingered a little while under the apple-trees, and watched the wise little bees go and come; and Miss Cynthia told me how much Georgie was like his grandfather, who was so steady and quiet, and always right after his business. "He never was ugly to us, as I know of," said she; "but I was always sort of 'fraid of father. Hannah, she used to talk to him free's she would to me; and he thought, 's long's Hannah did any thing, it was all right. I always held by my mother the most; and when father was took sick, —that was in the winter,—I sent right off for Hannah to come home. I used to be scared to death, when he'd want any thing done, for fear I shouldn't do it right. Mother, she'd had a fall, and couldn't get about very well. Hannah had good advantages. She went off keeping school when she wasn't but seventeen, and she saved up some money, and boarded over to the Port after a while, and learned the tailoress trade. She was always called very smart, —you see she's got ways different from me; and she was over to the Port several winters. She never said a word about it, but there was a young man over there that wanted to keep company with her. He was going out first mate of a new ship that was building. But, when she got word from me about father, she come right home, and that was the end of it. It seemed to be a pity. I used to think perhaps he'd come and see her some time, between voyages, and that he'd get to be cap'n, and they'd go off and take me with 'em. I always wanted to see something of the world. I never have been but dreadful little ways from home. I used to wish I could keep school; and

once my uncle was agent for his district, and he said I could have a chance; but the folks laughed to think o' me keeping school, and I never said any thing more about it. But you see it might 'a' led to something. I always wished I could go to Boston. I suppose you've been there? There! I couldn't live out o' sight o' the woods, I don't believe."

"I can understand that," said I, and half with a wish to show her I had some troubles, though I had so many pleasures that she did not, I told her that the woods I loved best had all been cut down the winter before. I had played under the great pines when I was a child, and I had spent many a long afternoon under them since. There never will be such trees for me any more in the world. I knew where the flowers grew under them, and where the ferns were greenest, and it was as much home to me as my own house. They grew on the side of a hill, and the sun always shone through the tops of the trees as it went down, while below it was all in shadow—and I had been there with so many dear friends who have died, or who are very far away. I told Miss Cynthia, what I never had told anybody else, that I loved those trees so much that I went over the hill on the frozen snow to see them one sunny winter afternoon, to say good-by, as if I were sure they could hear me, and looked back again and again, as I came away, to be sure I should remember how they looked. And it seemed as if they knew as well as I that it was the last time, and they were going to be cut down. It was a Sunday afternoon, and I was all alone, and the farewell was a reality and a sad thing to me. It was saying good-by to a great deal besides the pines themselves.

We stopped a while in the little garden, where Miss Cynthia gave me some magnificent big marigolds to put away for seed, and was much pleased because I was so delighted with her flowers. It was a gorgeous little garden to look at, with its red poppies, and blue larkspur, and yellow marigolds, and old-fashioned sweet, straying things,—all growing together in a tangle of which my friend seemed ashamed. She told me that it looked as ordered as could be, until the things begun to grow so fast she couldn't do any thing with 'em. She was very proud of one little pink-and-white verbena which somebody had given her. It was not growing very well; but it had not disappointed her about blooming.

Georgie had come back from his ramble some time before. He had cracked the lobster which Miss Hannah had promptly put on to boil, and I saw the old gray cat having a capital lunch off the shells; while the horse looked meeker than ever, with his headstall thrown back on his shoulders, eating his supper of hay by the fence; for Miss Hannah was a hospitable soul. She was tramping about in the house, getting supper, and we went in to find the table already pulled out into the floor. So Miss Cynthia hastened to set it. I could see she was very much ashamed of having been gone so long. Neither of us knew it was so late. But Miss Hannah said it didn't make a mite o' difference, there was next to nothing to do, and looked at me with a little smile, which said, "You see how it is. I'm the one who has faculty, and I favor her."

I was very hungry; and, though it was not yet six, it seemed a whole day since dinner-time. Miss Hannah made many apologies; and said, if I had only set a day, she would have had things as they ought to be. But it was a very good supper, and she knew it! She didn't know but I was tired o' lobsters. And when I had eaten two of the biscuit, and had begun an attack on the hot gingerbread, she said humbly that she didn't know when she had had such bad luck, though Georgie and I were both satisfied. He did not speak more than once or twice during the meal. I do not think he was afraid of me, for we had had many a lunch together when he had taken me out fishing; but this was an occasion, and there was at first the least possible restraint over all the company, though I'm glad to say it soon vanished. We had two kinds of preserves, and some honey beside, and there was a pie with a pale, smooth crust, and three cuts in the top. It looked like a very good pie of its kind; but one can't eat every thing, though one does one's best. And we had big cups of tea; and, though Miss Hannah supposed I had never eaten with any thing but silver forks before, it happened luckily that I had, and we were very merry indeed. Miss Hannah told us several stories of the time she kept school, and gave us some reminiscences of her life at the Port; and Miss Cynthia looked at me as if she had heard them before, and wished to say, "I know she's having a good time." I think Miss Cynthia felt, after we were out in the woods, as if I were her company, and she was responsible for me.

I thanked them heartily when I came away, for I had had such a pleasant time. Miss Cynthia picked me a huge nosegay of her flowers, and whispered that she hoped I wouldn't forget about lending her the book. Poor woman! she was so young,—only a girl yet, in spite of her having lived more than fifty years in that plain, dull home of hers, in spite of her faded face and her grayish hair. We came away in the rattling wagon. Georgie sat up in his place with a steady hand on the reins, and keeping a careful lookout ahead, as if he were steering a boat through a rough sea.

We passed the house where the auction had been, and it was all shut up. The cat sat on the doorstep waiting patiently, and I felt very sorry for her; but Georgie said there were neighbors not far off, and she was a master hand for squirrels. I was glad to get sight of the sea again, and to smell the first stray whiff of salt air that blew in to meet us as we crossed the marshes. I think the life in me must be next of kin to the life of the sea, for it is drawn toward it strangely, as a little drop of quicksilver grows uneasy just out of reach of a greater one.

"Good-night, Georgie!" said I; and he nodded his head a little as he drove away to take the horse home. "Much obliged to you for my ride," said he, and I knew in a minute that his father or one of the aunts had cautioned him not to forget to make his acknowledgments. He had told me on the way down that he had baited his nets all ready to set that evening. I knew he was in a hurry to go out, and it was not long before I saw his boat pushing off. It was after eight o'clock, and the moon was coming up pale and white out of the sea, while the west was still bright after the clear sunset.

I have a little model of a fishing dory that Georgie made for me, with its sprit-sail and killick and painter and oars and gaff all cleverly cut with the clumsiest of jackknives. I care a great deal for the little boat; and I gave him a better knife before I came away, to remember me by; but I am afraid its shininess and trig shape may have seemed a trifle unmanly to him. His father's had been sharpened on the beach-stones to clean many a fish, and it was notched and dingy; but this would cut; there was no doubt about that. I hope Georgie was sorry when we said good-by. I'm sure I was.

A solemn, careful, contented young life, with none of the playfulness or childishness that belong to it,—this is my little fisherman,

whose memory already fades of whatever tenderness his dead mother may have given him. But he is lucky in this, that he has found his work and likes it; and so I say, 'May the sea prove kind to him! and may he find the Friend those other fishermen found, who were mending their nets on the shores of Galilee! and may he make the harbor of heaven by and by after a stormy voyage or a quiet one, whichever pleases God!

Delia Grimwet

To an ordinary observer, nothing could be more commonplace than Kempton, a decrepit little apology for a village, lying on the coast of Maine. Properly speaking, however, no sea-port can be utterly commonplace, with its suggestion of the mystery of the sea, the ships, the sailors who have been to far lands, the glimpses of unwritten tragedies on every hand. But among sea-side villages Kempton was surely dull enough, and dry enough, and lifeless enough,—as if the sea-winds had sucked its vitality, leaving it empty and pallid and juiceless, like the cockle-shells which bleached upon its sandy beaches.

Yet Kempton had one peculiarity which marked it as singular among all New England towns. It had a woman to dig its graves.

Its one church stood stark and doleful upon the hill at whose foot lay the rotting wharves; and back from the church stretched the church-yard in which the Kempton dead took their long repose, scarcely more monotonous than their colorless lives. The sexton, digging their last resting-places in the ochery loam, might look far off toward the sea where they had wrested from the grudging waters a scanty subsistence; and the dead wives, if so be that their ears were yet sentient, might lie at night and hear below the beat of the waves which afar had rolled over the unmarked graves of their sailor husbands.

To and fro among the grass-grown mounds the sexton went daily, quite unmindful of being the unique feature of Kempton by belonging to the weaker sex. With masculine stride and coarse hands, her unkempt locks blown by the salt winds, the woman went her way and did her work with a steadfastness and a vigor which might have put to shame many a man idling about the boats under the hill. She was not an old woman,—not even middle-aged, except with the premature age of toil and sorrow; but the weather-beaten face, the stooping shoulders, and the faded hair made her seem old. To look at her, it was difficult to realize what her youth could have been like, or to call up any image of sweet or gracious maidenhood in which she could have shared.

It was a gray November day. The white-caps made doubly black the dark waves of the bay, and the bitter wind blew freshly through the withered grass and stubble, chasing the faded leaves over Kempton Hill until they rushed about the old meeting-house like a flight of terrified witches. A stranger was driving slowly up the road from the next town in an open carriage, and as he came to the top of the hill he drew rein before the church and looked about him.

His gaze was not that of one who beheld the scene for the first time. He gazed down at the irregular houses under the hill, cuddled like frightened and weak-kneed sheep. He looked over the bay to the lighthouse, looming ghastly and white against the dark sea and sky. His glance took in all the details of the picture, cold and joyless, devoid alike of warmth and color. He shivered and sighed, his brows drooping more heavily yet over his dark piercing eyes, and then turned his gaze to objects nearer at hand.

Close by was the stark church, with weather-beaten steeple, wherein half a dozen generations of Kempton women,—the men, for the most part, being at sea,—had worshipped the power of the storm, praying more for the escape from evil of the absent than for good to themselves. Beyond the church appeared the first headstones of the graveyard, the ground sloping away so rapidly that little more than the first row of slate slabs was visible from the street. With another shiver Mr. Farnsworth (for by that name the gentleman played his part upon this world's stage) got down from his carriage, fastened his horse, and walked toward the stones, whose rudely chiselled cherubs leered at him through their tawny rust of moss with a diabolic and sinister mirthfulness.

As Mr. Farnsworth opened the sagging and unpainted gate of the enclosure, he became aware that the place was not empty. The head and shoulders of a human being were visible half-way down the hill, now and then obscured by the dull-reddish heap of earth thrown up from a partially dug grave.

The visitor made his way down the irregular path, so steep as to be almost like a rude flight of stairs, and as he neared the worker, he suddenly perceived, with something of a shock, that the grave-digger was a woman. She worked as if familiar with her task, a man's battered hat pushed back

from her forehead, over which her faded hair straggled in confusion, and across which certain grimy streaks bore witness that she had not escaped the primal curse, but labored in the sweat of her brow.

Kempton's peculiarity in the matter of its sexton had not come to the knowledge of the stranger before, although he once had known the village life somewhat intimately. He regarded the woman with a double curiosity,—to see what she was like and to discover whether perchance he had ever known her. He paused as he neared her, resting one nicely gloved hand upon a tilted stone which perpetuated the memory and recorded the virtues of a captain who reposed in some chill cave under the Northern seas. Some slight sound caught the ear of the sexton, who until then had not perceived his approach; she looked up at him stolidly, and as stolidly looked down again, continuing her work without interruption. If there remained any consciousness of the strangeness of her occupation, or if there stirred any womanly shame to be so observed, they were betrayed by no outward sign. She threw up the dull-yellow earth at the feet of the new-comer as unmoved as if she had still only the dwellers in the graves as companions of her labor.

"Don't you find this rather hard work, my good woman?" the gentleman inquired at length, more by way of breaking the silence than from any especial interest.

"Yes," the sexton returned impassively, "it's hard enough."

"It is rather unusual work for a woman, too," he said.

To this very obvious remark she returned no answer, a stone to which she had come in her digging seeming to absorb all her attention. She unearthed the obstacle with some difficulty, seized it with her rough hands, and threw it up at the feet of the stranger, who watched her with that idle interest which labor begets in the unconcerned observer.

"Do you always do this work?" Farnsworth asked at length.

"Yes," was the laconic return.

"But the old sexton,—Joe Grimwet,—is he gone?"

The woman looked up with some interest at this indication that the other had some previous acquaintance with Kempton and its people. She did not, however, stop her labor, as a man would probably have stopped.

“Yes,” she said. “He’s buried over yonder,—there beyond the burdocks.”

The gentleman changed his position uneasily. Some subtle disquietude had arisen to disturb his serenity. The wind rustled mournfully among the dry leaves, the pebbles rattled against the spade of the grave-digger, increasing the sombreness of a scene which might easily affect one at all susceptible to outward influences. In such an atmosphere a sensitive nature not unfrequently experiences a certain feeling of unreality, as if dealing with scenes and creatures of the imagination rather than with actualities; and Farnsworth, whatever the delicacy of his mental fibre, was conscious of such a sense at this moment. He hastened to speak again, as if the sound of his own voice were needed to assure him of the genuineness of the place and scene.

“But how long has he been dead?” he asked. “And his daughter; what became of her?”

The grave-digger straightened herself to her full height; brushing back her wind-blown hair with one grimy hand, she raised her face so that her deep-set eyes were fixed upon the questioner’s face.

“So you knew Delia Grimwet?” she said. “When was you here before? It’d go hard for you to make her out now, if it’s long since.”

“Is she here still?” Farnsworth persisted, ignoring her question.

“Yes,” the sexton replied, suddenly sinking back into the unfinished grave as a frightened animal might retreat into its den. “Yes; she lives in the old place.”

“Alone?”

“Her and the boy.”

He recoiled a step, as if the mention of a child startled or repelled him. Yet to a close observer it might have seemed as if he were making an

effort to press her with further questions. If so his courage did not prove sufficient, and he watched in silence while the woman before him went steadily on with her arduous work. Presently, however, he advanced again toward the edge of the pit, which was rapidly approaching completion under her familiar labor.

“Should I find her at home at this time?” he inquired. “Or would she be out at work?”

The woman started and crouched, much as if she had received or expected a blow.

“She’s out, most likely,” she replied in a muffled voice. “She’ll be home along about sundown.”

Farnsworth lingered irresolutely a moment or two, as if there were many things concerning which he could wish to ask; but, as the woman gave him no encouragement, he turned at last and climbed the slippery, ragged path up to the church, untethered his horse, and drove slowly down the hill to the village.

Cap’n Nat Hersey was just coming out of the village store, and to him Farnsworth addressed an inquiry where he might find shelter for himself and horse.

“Well,” the cap’n responded, with the deliberation of a man who has very little to say and his whole life to say it in, “well I dunno but ye might get a chance with Widder Bemis, an’ I dunno *as* ye could; but there ain’t no harm trying, as I knows of.”

Further inquiry regarding the whereabouts of the domicile of the Widow Bemis led to an offer on the part of Cap’n Hersey to act as pilot to that haven. He declined, however, to take a seat in the buggy. The Cap’n had his own opinion of land-vehicles. A man might with perfect assurance trust himself in a boat; but, for his own part, the cap’n had no faith in those dangerous structures which roam about with nothing better than dry land under them. He walked along by the side of the carriage, conversing affably with the stranger under his convoy.

“Isn’t it a queer notion to have a woman for a sexton?” Farnsworth asked, as they wended along.

“Well, yes,” the captain returned reflectively. “Yes, it is sort of curious. Folks mostly speaks of it that comes here. It is curious, if ye look at it that way. But it all come about as natural as a barnacle on a keel. Old Sexton Grimwet kept getting considerable feeble, and Dele she took to helping him with his work. She was sort of cut off from folks, as ye may say, owing to having a baby and no father to show for it, and she naturally took to heaving anchor alone, or leastways along with the old man. And when the old man was took down with a languishment, she turned to and did all his work for him,—having gradually worked into it, as you may say.”

The cap’n paused to recover from his astonishment at having been betrayed into so long a speech; but, as the stranger had the air of expecting him to continue, he presently went on again:

“There was them that wanted her turned out when old Grimwet died. Some said a woman of that character hadn’t ought to have no connection with the church, even to digging its graves. But Parson Eaton he was good for ’em—I’ve always noticed that when these pious men gets their regular mad up they most generally have things their own way; and he preached ’em a sermon about the Samaritan woman, and Mary Magdalene, and a lot more of them disreputable Scripture women-folks, and, though he never mentioned Dele by name, they all knew what he was driving at, and they wilted. ’Twas a pitiful sight to see the girl a-digging her own father’s grave up there. Me and Tom Tobey and Zenas Faston took hold and finished it for her.”

They moved on in silence a moment or two. Farnsworth’s gaze was fixed upon the darkening bay, and no longer interrogated his companion; but the latter soon again took up his narrative:—

“’Twas well the parson stood up for Dele, too; women-folks is so cussed hard on each other. They wouldn’t ha’ let the girl live, I believe. I always were of the notion there warn’t no harm in Dele. Some —— city chap got the better of her. She never was over-smart, but she was awful pretty; and I never believed there was any harm in her. At any rate, she digs

a grave as well as a man, and I guess them that's in 'em don't lay awake none thinking who tucked 'em in."

The house of the Widow Bemis was by this time reached, and that estimable lady, who in the summer furnished accommodations to a boarder whenever that rare blessing was to be secured in Kempton, readily undertook the charge of Mr. Farnsworth and his horse for the night. The latter was given into the care of her daughter, for the frequent absences of the men had accustomed the damsels of Kempton to those labors which in inland villages are more frequently left to their brothers; and Farnsworth strolled off toward the wharves, leaving the widow Bemis and Cap'n Hersey in an agony of curiosity in regard to himself and his errand.

Whatever may have been Farnsworth's feelings at the discovery that the daughter of the dead sexton and the woman of whom he had asked tidings of her were identical,—and they must have been both deep and strong—he had given no outward sign. But now the settling of his brows, and the disquiet apparent in his eyes betrayed his inward conflict. He strolled out upon one of the rotting wharves about which the tide lapped in mournful iteration, folded his arms upon a breast-high post, and stood gazing seaward.

The retrospect which occupied his mind was scarcely more cheerful than the gray scene which spread before his eyes. How awful are the corpses of dead sins which memory casts up, as the sea its victims! The betrayal of a woman is a ghastly thing when one looks back upon it stripped of the garlands and enchantments of passion and temptation; and to Farnsworth, with the image fresh in his remembrance of that faded, earth-stained woman digging a grave upon the bleak hillside, the fault of his youth seemed an incredible dream which only stubborn and stinging memory converted into a possibility. A retrospect is apt to be essentially a plea for self against conscience; but in his gloomy revery Farnsworth found scant excuse for the wreck he had made of the life of Delia Grimwet. He had gone away, married, and lived honored and prosperous. He would have forgotten, had not some nobility of his nature prevented. With the stubbornness of his race, he had fought long and determinedly against his conscience, but he had been forced to yield at last. The death of his wife, to whom he had been tenderly attached, had at once left him free to make such

reparation as might still be possible, and had softened him as only sharp sorrow can. He had come to Kempton with the determination of finding Delia, and of doing whatever could be done, at whatever cost to himself.

He had been unprepared, however, for the woman he found. He had left a fresh, beautiful young girl; ten years had transformed her into a repulsive old woman. He had no means of adequately measuring the force of the storms of scorn and poverty and sorrow which had beaten upon Delia Grimwet in the years that had made of him the cultured, delicately nurtured man he was. What man ever appreciated the woe of the woman he betrays? Indeed, what measure has a man of the sorrow of any woman? Farnsworth had painfully to adjust himself to a condition of affairs for which he should have been prepared, yet which took him absolutely by surprise.

He lingered upon the bleak wharf, unconsciously the object of much mildly speculative curiosity, until the twilight began to fall. Then with a shiver, no less of mind than of body, he shook off his painful abstraction, and turned his steps toward the path, once well known, which led to the house of Delia Grimwet. It seemed to him, as he paused a brief instant with his hand upon the old knocker, as if nothing here had changed in ten years. The sunlight would have shown him traces of decay, but in the gathering dusk the house seemed a pallid phantom from the past, unchanged but lifeless.

But his knock at once destroyed all illusions, since it summoned the woman who belonged not at all to that past which he remembered, but to the pitiful and too tangible present. She held her guttering candle up without a word, and, having identified him, made him, without speaking, a signal to enter.

When Farnsworth had left her in the afternoon, Delia crouched in the bottom of the grave she was digging, her first feeling being an unreasoning desire for concealment. She thought she should remain passive if the sides of the pit collapsed and buried her. In the old days before her boy was born she had been night after night out on the old wharves, praying for courage to drown herself. After the child came, her feelings changed, and she longed only to escape and to take her son away from the scorn and the sordid life which surrounded them. Gradually she had become

hardened; hers was one of those common natures to which custom and pain are opiates, mercifully dulling all sensibilities. To-day the appearance of her betrayer had revived all the old impressions, and for a moment seemed to transport her to the early days when her anguish was new. The keenest pangs of sorrow stabbed her afresh, and she lived again the bitter moments of her sin and shame. Her instinct was to flee from the man whose presence meant to her only pain.

But habit is strong, and presently the fading light reminded the sexton that her work was still unfinished, and that Widow Pettigrove, who was past all earthly tribulation, must have her last bed prepared, whatever the woe of the living woman who worked at it with trembling hands and a sensation as if a demon had clutched her by the throat. Yet work was not unmerciful; it brought some relief, since it served to dilute the thought which rushed dizzily to her brain, and by the time her toil was completed she was steadier. When she opened the door to Farnsworth she was not unlike her usual stolid self. She perceived at a glance that he had learned who she was, and she hoped in a blind, aching way, that he had not betrayed his presence to the neighbors, thus to re-awaken all the old stinging flight of bitter words.

Farnsworth followed Delia into the kitchen, without even those greetings which habit renders so involuntary that only in the most poignant moments are they disregarded. With their past between them it was not easy to break the silence. Farnsworth seated himself, and the woman stood regarding him. There was in her attitude all the questioning, all the agony, of her years of suffering. Her wrongs and her sorrows gave her a dignity before which he shrank as he could not have quailed under the most withering reproaches. Whatever words he would have spoken—and no man can come deliberately to so important a crisis without formulating, even if unconsciously, the plea which his self-defence will make—were forgotten, or seemed miserably inadequate now. What were words to this woman, pallid and worn before her time with privation, anguish, and unwomanly toil? The contrast between his rich and careful dress and her coarse garb, between his white hands and her knotted fingers, between his high-bred, pale face and her cowed, weather-beaten countenance, was too violent not to be apparent to them both,—as if they were in some strange way merely

spectators looking dispassionately at this wretched meeting of those who had once been passionate lovers.

With each moment the silence became more oppressive; yet as each moment dragged by it became more difficult to break the stillness. Only a man utterly devoid of remorse or feeling could have framed upon his tongue commonplace phrases at such a time. It seemed to Farnsworth as if he were brought to judgment before the whole universe. His throat became parched. He longed to have the candle and the flames flickering in the old fireplace go out in darkness, and take from his sight the Nemesis that confronted him.

He broke the silence at last with a cry:—

“Ah, my God, Delia! What have I done?”

She wavered as she stood, putting out her hand as if reaching for support. Then she half staggered backward into a chair.

“There is nothing I can say!” Farnsworth went on vehemently. “There is nothing I can do! I came here dreaming of making reparation; but there is no reparation I can make. There is nothing that can change the past,—nothing that will undo what I have done to you. Oh, my God! How little I dreamed it would be like this!”

“No,” she said slowly, almost stupidly, “nothing can undo it.”

“Why did you not tell me?” he began. “Why—”

But the words rebuked him before they were spoken. He buried his face in his hands, and again they were silent. What the woman,—this woman who had never been able to think much, even in her best days, and who now was blunted and dulled almost to stupidity,—what she felt in those bitter moments, who can tell? The man’s soul was a tumult of wild regret and unavailing remorse, while she waited again for him to speak.

“But,” Farnsworth said at length, a new idea seizing him, “but the—our child, Delia? The boy?”

A shuddering seized her. Unused to giving way to her emotions, she was torn by her excited feelings almost to the verge of convulsions. She

clutched the arms of her chair and set her teeth together. In her incoherent attempts at thought, as she had delved among her graves, there had occurred to her the possibility that the father might sometime take his child from her. Now this fear possessed her like a physical epilepsy. Twice she tried to speak, and only emitted a gurgling sound as if strangling. He sprang toward her, but a sudden repulsion gave her self-control. She put out her hands as if to ward him off.

“Oh, my boy, my boy!” she cried, breaking out into hysterical sobs. “My boy, my boy!”

She wrung her hands, and twisted them together in fierce contortions which frightened Farnsworth; but she still would not allow him to approach her. She struggled for composure, writhing in paroxysms dreadful to see.

“Oh, my child!” she cried out, in a tone new and piercing; “no, no! not him! Oh, God! You cannot have my boy!”

Farnsworth retreated sharply.

He had not considered this. Indeed, so different was everything he found from everything he had expected, that whatever he had preconsidered was swept out of existence as irrelevant. He was confronted with a catastrophe in which it was necessary to judge unerringly and to act instantly, yet which paralyzed all his powers by its strangeness and its horror. He groped his way back to his chair and sat down, leaving the silence again unbroken save by her convulsive breathing and his deep-drawn sighs.

All at once a new sound broke in upon them, and the mother started to her feet.

“He is coming!” she gasped hoarsely. “I sent him away; but he has come back. He could not keep away, my beautiful boy.”

Her face was illumined with a love which wellnigh transfigured it. The door was opened violently, and the boy came rudely in,—a gaunt, rough whelp of a dozen summers, defiant, bold, and curious.

"I knew there was something up," the young rascal observed with much self-complacency. "I knew when you sent me off to stay all night that somebody's funeral was comin' off, and I was bound I'd be here to see it."

Neither the mother nor the father returned any answer. Ordinary feelings were so absolutely swept away that the woman did not even remember that she should have attempted to quiet and to excuse the intruder. Even the maternal pride which would usually have been troubled by the impression the child's rudeness must make upon her guest was overwhelmed by the greater emotion which possessed her whole being.

Farnsworth had never been more keenly alive in every fibre of his being than at this moment. All his family pride, his refined tastes, his delicate nature, revolted from a kinship with the ugly, uncouth child who stood grinning maliciously upon his guilty parents. His impulse, almost too strong to be resisted, was to turn back and hide himself again in the world from which he had come,—to leave this woman and her loutish child in the quiet and obscurity in which he had found them. But he was nobler than his impulses and had paid already too dearly for rashness; the claim of a son upon the father who has brought him into the world grasped his sense of justice like a hand of steel.

He rose to his feet firm and determined.

"Go away now," he said to the boy quietly, but in a voice which even the urchin felt admitted of no disobedience. "I wish to talk with your mother. I will see you to-morrow."

"Yes, Farnsworth," the mother said pleadingly. "Go to bed now. I will come to you before long. That's a good boy."

The boy slowly and unwillingly withdrew, his reluctance showing how rare obedience was to him, and the parents were once more alone.

"You have given him my name," were Farnsworth's first words, as the door closed behind his son.

"It was father who did that. He said he should remember to curse you every time the name was spoken."

"And you?" the other asked, almost with a shudder.

"I did not care. Cursing could not change things. Only I would not let him do it before the boy. I didn't want him to know what sort of a father he had."

In the midst of his self-abasement some hidden fibre of resentment and wounded vanity tingled at her words; but he would not heed it.

"I am not so wholly bad, Delia," he said in a moment. "I came back to marry you. It will not change or mend the past; but it is the best I can do now."

"It is no use to talk of that," she returned wearily; "you and I are done with each other. Even I can see that."

She was spent with the violence of her emotions, and only longed to have Farnsworth leave her. She was keenly sensitive now of the nicety of his attire, the contrast between him and her meagre surroundings. The shamefacedness of the poor overwhelmed her. She rose with uneven steps and trembling hands, and began to put things to rights a little. She snuffed the ill-conditioned candle, and trimmed the fire, whose drift-wood sent out tongues of colored flame. She set back into their usual gaunt and vulgar order the chairs which had been disturbed.

Farnsworth watched her with an aching heart.

"Delia," he said at length, "come and sit down. We must decide what it is best to do."

She obeyed him, although with evident reluctance. All the brief dignity which her elevation of mood had imparted had vanished now, leaving her more haggard and worn than ever. A faded, prematurely old woman, she sat twisting her red, stained hands in a vain attempt to hide their ugliness in the folds of her poor dress. Even self-pity in Farnsworth's breast began to vanish in the depth of compassion which the sexton excited.

"Delia," he said, "I must think for us both, and for the boy. He must be considered. For his sake we must be married."

It was at once with a sense of relief and of humiliation that he saw how she shrank from this proposition. To have fallen from godhood in the meanest woman's eyes is the keenest thrust at man's pride. It gave

Farnsworth a new conception that the gulf between them must look as impassable from her side as from his. He had thus far been too much absorbed in the sacrifices he himself was making to consider that all the desirabilities of his world would not appeal to her as to him,—that its very fulness and richness which so held and delighted him would confuse and repel her.

“It is of no use!” he exclaimed, starting up. “I must have time to think. I will come back in the morning. Think yourself, Delia,—not of me, or even of yourself, so much as of the boy. It is of him that we must have the first care. Nothing can much change our lives; but the world is before him. Goodnight.”

However different may have been the reflexions of Farnsworth and of Delia Grimwet through that long, sad night, their conclusions must have been in some respects identical, for when the former came to the house in the morning with the astonished clergyman the woman acquiesced without any discussion in the performance of the marriage ceremony. It was an occasion which the Rev. Mr. Eaton long remembered, and of which he told to the end of his life, filling out, it must be confessed, as time went on, its spare facts with sundry incidents, trifling, it is true, yet gradually overlaying the bare truth with a completeness which the clerical gossip himself, whose belief always kept pace with his invention, was far from realizing. The only thing he could with accuracy have told, beyond the simple fact of the marriage, was that when, according to his wont, he attempted to add a few words of exhortation and moral reflection, the bridegroom cut him short and showed him to the door with a courtesy perfect but irresistible, the rebuff somewhat softened by the liberality of the fee which accompanied the dismissal.

The boy during these singular proceedings had remained in a state of excited astonishment almost amounting to stupefaction; but when the newly united family were alone together, his natural perversity broke out, and showed itself in its natural and unamiable colors. To the father the child’s every uncouth word and act were the most acute torture; and the mother, partly by woman’s instinct, partly from previous acquaintance with her husband’s fastidiousness, was to a great degree sensible of this. She made no effort, however, to restrain her child. She seemed to have thrown

off all responsibility upon the father, and busied herself in preparations for the boy's departure, about which, although neither had spoken of it, there seemed to be some tacit understanding.

The forenoon was well worn when Farnsworth came to the door with his carriage, for which he had gone in person.

"Come, Delia," he said, entering the house. "We may as well leave everything as it is. I told Mrs. Bemis to lock up the house and see to it. Are you ready?"

"Farnsworth is," she replied, seating herself in a low chair and drawing to her side the uncouth boy, who struggled to get free.

He broke in rudely, announcing his readiness, his joy at leaving Kempton, and his satisfaction at wearing his Sunday jacket, which to his father looked poor enough.

"But you, Delia?" her husband inquired, putting up his hand to quiet the child. "Are you ready?"

"I am not going."

Whether it was relief, remorse, or astonishment which overwhelmed him, John Farnsworth could not have told. He stood speechless, looking at his wife like one suddenly stricken dumb. The boy filled in the pause with noisy expostulations, depriving the tragedy of even the poor dignity of silence. The father knew from the outset that remonstrances would not be likely to avail, yet he remonstrated; perhaps, for human nature is subtle beyond word, he was unconsciously for that reason the more earnest in his pleading. He would have been glad could this woman and her child have been swept out of existence. Already he had to hold himself strongly in check, lest the reaction which had followed his heroic resolve to marry Delia should show itself; but he choked back the feeling with all his resolution.

"No," Delia persistently said, her eyes dry, her voice harsh from huskiness. "I've no place anywhere but here. It is too late now. I've more feeling than I thought, for I do care something even now to be an honest woman in the sight of my neighbors; and that'll help me bear it, I suppose.

Take the boy, and do for him all you owed to me. I should spoil all if I went. He is best quit of me if he's to please you and grow like you. I'll stay here and dig graves; I am fit for nothing else. I want nothing of you. I married you for the boy's sake, and for his sake I break my heart and send him away; but I will have nothing for myself. The days when I would have taken a penny from you are long gone."

She spoke calmly enough, but with a certain poignant stress which made every word fall like a weight. He did not urge her further. He held out his hand, into which she laid hers lifelessly.

"Good-bye," he said. "As God sees me, Delia, I'll do my best by the boy. I will write to you. If you change your decision,—but no matter now. I will write to you and to the minister."

All other words of parting were brief and soon spoken. The boy showed no emotion at leaving his mother, as he had throughout exhibited no tenderness. He climbed noisily into the carriage, and the father and son, so strangely assorted, rode together up the hill, past the stark meeting-house, and so on into the world whose seething waves seldom troubled, even by such a ripple as the events just narrated, the dull calm of Kempton; and to John Farnsworth it was as if the woful burden of remorse which had so long vexed heart and conscience had taken bodily shape and rode by his side.

Delia had been calm until the two were gone,—so calm that her husband thought her still half dazed by the excitement and anguish of the previous night. She stood steadily at the window until the carriage disappeared behind the grave-covered hill. Then she threw herself grovelling upon the floor in the very ecstasy of woe. She did not shriek, strangling in her throat into inarticulate moans and gurglings the cries which rent their way from her inmost soul; but she beat her head upon the bare floor; she caught at the furniture like a wild beast, leaving the print of her strong teeth in the hard wood; she was convulsed with her agony, a speechless animal rage, a boundless, irrepressible anguish which could not be measured or expressed. She clutched her bosom with her savage hands, as if she would tear herself in pieces; she wounded and bruised herself with a fierceness so intense as to be almost delight.

In the midst of her wildest paroxysm there came a knocking at the door. She started up, her face positively illuminated.

“They have come back!” she murmured in ecstasy.

She rushed to the door and undid its fastenings with fingers tremulous from eager joy. A neighbor confronted her, staring in dismay and amazement at her strange and dishevelled appearance.

“What’s come to ye, Dele?” he demanded roughly, though not unkindly. “When ye goin’ to put the box in Widder Pettigrove’s grave?”

She confronted him for an instant with a wandering look in her eye, as though she had mercifully been driven mad. Then the tyranny of life and habit reasserted itself.

“I’ll come up now, Bill,” she said.

And she went back to her graves.

The Girl He Left Behind Him

On one particular Sunday in August, a brilliant sunny, breezeless day, such a day as would under ordinary circumstances conduce to certain drowsiness even in the most piously disposed, the church-goers of Little Branston were preternaturally alert, if not quite so attentive as usual. For behold! Corporal Richard Baverstock, Widow Baverstock's only son, and the father of Matilda Ann, the three-year-old darling of the village, had returned from the wars with a very brown face, a medal, two or three honourable scars, and, it was whispered, a pocketful of "dibs."

Every one knew about Corporal Dick, the sharp boy who had been the general pet and plaything in early years, much as his own "Tilly Ann" was now; the dashing soldier, whose occasional visits to his native place in all the glories of uniform had caused on each occasion a flutter of excitement which had endured long after his own departure; the hero of romance, whose sudden appearance with a beautiful bride, wedded secretly somewhere up the country, had made more than one pretty maid's heart grow sore within her, and caused many wiseacres to shake their heads; the disconsolate young widower whose year-old wife had been laid to rest in the churchyard yonder, immediately after the birth of their child; the boy-father, bending half wonderingly over the blue-eyed baby on his mother's knee; the warrior, wounded "out abroad," whose letters had been passed from hand to hand in the little place, and conned over and admired and marvelled at till old Mrs. Baverstock, when each mail came to hand, found herself raised to a pinnacle of honour to which otherwise she would never have dared to aspire—he had come home now for a brief blissful fortnight before rejoining his regiment at the dépôt. Not one of the congregation there present but had heard of his return on the previous day, and of how he had almost knocked over the old mother in the vehemence of his greeting, and how he had caught up Tilly Ann and hugged her, and some said cried over her; and how he had almost within the hour walked up to the little cemetery and knelt by his wife's grave, which, the neighbours opined, "howed a wonderful deal o' feelin' in the man as 'twas a'most to be expected he'd ha chose a second by now."

"But they d' say, my dear, as the women out abroad be a terrible ugly lot, and most of 'em black. Tisn't likely as Corporal Baverstock 'ud so much as look at any o' they, arter pickin' sich a vitty maid for his first missis."

It was Mrs. Cousins who made this remark to Mrs. Adlam, as they paced together along the flagged path that led to the church porch; and it is not surprising that both ladies felt constrained to turn their heads when the martial tread of Soldier Dick resounded up the church a few moments later.

Jenny Meatyard nudged Maggie Fripp.

"Do 'ee see his medal?" she inquired in a whisper.

Maggie nodded. "That there korky uniform do suit en wonderful well."

Two village mothers exchanged glances of tender approbation, for, clinging to Corporal Baverstock's hand, and taking preposterously long steps in the endeavour to keep pace with his strides, was Tilly Ann, in her best starched white frock, and with her yellow hair curled in a greater profusion of corkscrew ringlets than her granny had ever yet achieved.

"Bain't it a pictur'?" one pair of motherly eyes seemed to say to the other, and I think many of the good simple folk performed their devotions all the better because of the consciousness of the two happy hearts, the man's and the little child's, beating in their midst.

The service once over, friends and neighbours gathered round the young soldier outside the church door. Those nearest spoke to him; those less fortunate, on the outskirts of the little crowd, contented themselves with admiring comments.

"He d' seem to have filled out, though he have been punished so terrible out yonder."

"My dear, they did tell I as his poor leg was all one solid wownd. D'ye mind how Mrs. Baverstock did take on, pore 'ooman. And well she mid."

"Well she mid, indeed. Ah! 'tis a comfort to see as Corporal Baverstock d' seem able to walk so well as ever. I see Mrs. Baverstock didn't come to church—'tis a wonder."

"Nay, no wonder at all. It bain't likely as the poor body could leave her Sunday dinner the very first day her son be a-comed home. She's busy, that's what she be."

"Ah! to be sure. There, Lard now, look at Tilly Ann! He've a-got her up in his arms. Dear, to be sure, 'tis a beautiful sight, they two faces side by side. The maid doesn't favour her daddy a bit—nay, 'tis the very pictur' o' the pore wife."

"E-es; she had that yellow hair, and them great big blue eyes. There, I've a-got a china cup at home what be jist the same colour. 'Tisn't nat'ral for a maid to have eyes that blue. I wouldn't mention it to Mrs. Baverstock, nor yet to Dick, but I shouldn't wonder at all if Tilly Ann was to follow her mother afore very long, pore little maid."

"Ah! they do say as when a young mother be took like that, as often as not she'll keep on a-callin' and a-callin', till the pore little thing she've a-left behind fair withers away."

While this cheerful line of prognostication was being followed up beyond her ken, Tilly Ann sat bolt upright in her father's arms, looking round her with a proprietary air, and occasionally patting his cheek with a broad dimpled little palm. She was a tall, well-made child, plump and fair, with rosy cheeks and sturdy limbs that would in themselves have given the lie to any dismal croakings; it was no wonder that "daddy's" eyes perpetually rested on her with a glow of pride.

"And she were quite a little 'un when ye did last see her, weren't she, Corporal?" said some one. (In Branston the good folk were punctilious with regard to titles.) "Ye'd scarce ha' knowed her I d' 'low if ye'd met her on the road."

"Know her," said Corporal Baverstock, "I'd know her among a thousand! 'Tis what I did write to my mother. Says I, 'I'd pick her out anywheres, if 'twas only by the dimple in her chin.'"

The bystanders nodded at each other; they remembered that particular letter well, and had much appreciated the phrase in question.

"To be sure, Corporal, so ye did, so ye did. And the maid have a dimple sure enough. There, 'tis plain for all folks to see."

Tilly Ann turned up her little face, and her father kissed the cleft chin with sudden passion. Then he tossed her up in his arms and laughed.

"Many a time I've a-thought o' that dimple," he observed, in rather an unsteady voice, "and wondered if I'd ever set eyes on it again."

"And look at her curls," said a woman admiringly. "They be a-sheenin' like gold to-day. She thinks a deal o' they curls, don't 'ee, Tilly? If anybody axed her for one she'd al'ays say she was a-savin' on 'em up for daddy—didn't 'ee, Tilly?"

Tilly Ann, overcome with coyness, buried her face in her father's shoulder, and giggled, wriggling her little fat body the while, and drumming on his side with her lace-up boots.

"Hold hard there!" cried he. "Them boots of yourn be so bad as a pom-pom. Come, we must be lookin' up the wold lady. Say Ta-ta, and we'll be off."

One blue eye peeped out shyly from beneath the forest of curls, one little sunburnt hand was waved comprehensively; a smothered voice uttered the necessary "Ta-ta," with an accompaniment of chuckles and wriggles, and the soldier, clasping his burden more tightly, and nodding laughingly right and left made his way towards home.

No one, looking at Mrs. Baverstock as she stood at her doorway in her neat black stuff gown, the sleeves of which were decently drawn down to her very wrists, would have guessed at the magnitude of the culinary labours in which she had been employed. The beef was now done to a turn, the "spuds" boiled to a nicety; she had made pastry of the most solid description, which was even now simmering in the oven—I use the word "simmering" advisedly, for in the generosity of her heart she had not spared the dripping. The tea was brewed, hot and strong, the teapot, singed by long use, standing on the hob. There was a crusty loaf, a pat of butter indented in

the middle with one of Dick's regimental buttons, and a plate of cakes, hard as the nether—millstone and very crumbly, having been purchased from the distant town at the beginning of the week in expectation of this auspicious day.

"Well, mother, this be a spread!" cried the soldier, good-humouredly, as he set the child upon her legs. "I haven't sat down to such a meal as this since I left old England. 'Tis fit for a king."

Mrs. Baverstock rubbed her bony hands together; and laughed deprecatingly. She was a little woman, with very bright, beady black eyes, and hair that was still coal-black in spite of her wrinkled face. Her son was like her, but taller and better looking. One had but to glance at the child to realise that she must be the image of her mother.

"Nay, now," said the widow; "I do do my best for 'ee, Dick, but I d' 'low it bain't so very grand. I'd like to do 'ee honour. There bain't nothin' too good for 'ee to my mind, if I could give it 'ee."

"I tell 'ee, mother, some of the poor chaps out yonder 'ud give summat to sit down to this 'ere dinner. Bully beef wi' a pound or two o' raw flour, what you haven't got nothin' to cook wi'—it do make a man feel a bit sick, I can tell 'ee, when it do come day arter day."

"Dear heart alive," groaned his mother, "a body 'ud think they mid manage a bit better! Lard, to think on't! Tis all along o' the poor dear Queen bein' dead, ye mid be sure! There needs to be a woman at the head o' things! I reckon the Government be all made up o' men folks now, and men never has any notion o' doin' for theirselves. There, I did use to say to father many a time, 'If I was to leave 'ee to yourself I d' 'low ye'd go eatin' any kind o' rubbish.' There wants to be a sensible woman or two i' th' Government—no woman 'ud ever think o' sendin' out the poor chaps' bit o' food raw. There bain't a hedger or ditcher but has his bit o' dinner put ready for en, and I reckon soldiers have got stummicks much same as other folks."

Dick had only half attended to this speech; he had been standing by the door intently gazing up the village street, and shading his eyes with his hand.

"Why, I'm blowed!" he exclaimed. "Here's a mate o' mine ridin' this way! Yes, so it be. I thought he was goin' a-coortin'. Hullo, Billy!"

A bicycle wheeled round abruptly, and the rider alighted at the cottage door. A big young man, with the bronzed face which would have announced his recent return from the front, even had not his khaki uniform proclaimed the fact.

"I thought I'd look 'ee up," he explained, shaking hands with his friend with a somewhat sheepish air. "You and me bein' mates, d'ye see, and me feelin' a bit dull over yonder."

"Why, what's become o' she?" interrupted Dick, with a grin.

"Don't talk about her! She be just like the rest—'Out o' sight out o' mind'—took up wi' a civilian soon as my back were turned. I reckoned I'd come and have a look at *your* maid."

"Yes, to be sure!" cried Dick jovially. "My sweetheart han't a-took up wi' anybody else—she've a-been faithful and true."

"What's that?" inquired Mrs. Baverstock, coming forward, her little black eyes looking ready to start from her head.

"Tis a kind of a little joke what me and Billy have a-got between us about my sweetheart. There, he can tell 'ee the tale while we're eatin'. This 'ere be my mother, Billy. This be Mr. Billy Caines—a Darset man same as myself. Him and me was reg'lar pals out there, wasn't we, Bill?"

"I d' 'low we was," responded Private Caines, after ceremoniously pumping Mrs. Baverstock's hand up and down. "We did fight side by side, and we was wounded side by side, and we was a-layin' side by side for weeks in the field hospital, wasn't us, Dick?"

"I reckon we had a bit too much o' that there hospital," responded the Corporal, drawing forward a chair for his friend. "'Twas there we did have so much talk about my sweetheart. Ha, ha, ye didn't know as I'd a-got a sweetheart, did ye, old lady?" he inquired of his mother. "Billy 'ull tell 'ee about that," and he winked surreptitiously at his friend.

Mrs. Baverstock was evidently in a flutter. What between this sudden arrival of six feet of khaki-clad humanity and the innuendoes which had been recently thrown out, touching a subject on which she felt strongly (the possibility of Dick's marrying again), she actually set the pastry on the table in the place of the beef, and helped the two soldiers to a cake each instead of a piece of bread.

"Why, you be wool-gathering, that you be. You've a-got everything in a reg'lar caddie!" cried her son, as she paused to clack her tongue remorsefully over her mistakes. "Business first and pleasure arterwards. Up wi' the beef! Now then, Billy, fall to! A bit better tasted nor bully, bain't it?"

Billy groaned appreciatively, with his mouth full, and silence ensued, during which Mrs. Baverstock cut up Tilly Ann's dinner, and presented her with a spoon.

Tilly Ann's eyes had been fixed unwinkingly upon the new comer since his arrival, and she had now apparently classified him, for, after successfully piloting one or two spoonfuls of beef and potato to her little red mouth, she paused, drummed on the table with the handle of her spoon, and remarked conclusively:

"Another daddy!"

"Dear, to be sure! Hark to the child," said granny, while the two men laughed uproariously.

"The little maid's sharp, I can tell 'ee," announced Dick; "she do know the difference between soldier and civilian a'ready. Never see'd no soldier but I afore, and now, when another do come, says she to herself, 'This must be another daddy.' Ho! ho!"

"She've a-got more sense nor many a wolder maid," returned Private Caines gloomily; "she do know what's what—I d' 'low she wouldn't ha' gone a-takin' up wi' a (qualified) civilian when you weren't to the fore. She be a bonny little maid, too," he added reflectively, eyeing the chubby pink and white face. "Yes, you've a-got good taste, as you did tell I out yonder."

"Come, don't 'ee spoil the tale," cried the Corporal, laughing; "begin at the right end. My mother here do want to hear about my sweetheart."

"I don't want to hear no sich thing," retorted the old woman, querulously, but anxiously, too. "I do know 'ee better nor to think you'd have any sich nonsensical notions; you as be a widow man, and have a-buried sich a lovin' wife, what have a-left 'ee the darlinest little maid to keep. Us do want no step-mothers; us do want all the love, the wold mother and the little maid."

Dick's face twitched, and his eyes clouded, but before he could answer, Private Billy Caines, who was not endowed with remarkably acute perceptions, began his narrative in a loud and merry voice.

"Him and me was knocked over the same day—I shouldn't wonder but what it was the same shell. I couldn't tell 'ee for sure about that, for I were hit all to flinders, and for a bit they thought I was done for. But when I did get a bit better, and did begin to look about, I'm danged if the first thing I did see weren't poor old Dick's long white face, lyin' there so solemn, wi' his girt hollow black eyes, a-starin' and a-starin' straight i' front of en. I did use to watch en, and he did always look the same—sorrowful and anxious, and one day I did call out to en, soft like, 'What be thinkin' on, man? The us'al thing, I s'pose?' He did scraggle his head a bit round on the pillow and squint back at me. 'What mid that be?' says he. 'Why,' says I, 'the girl I left behind me!' 'Be that what you be a-thinkin' on?' says he. 'O' course,' says I; 'what else?' 'What else, indeed?' says he, and he did sigh same as if he had a bellows inside of en."

"Did he actually say he was a-thinkin' about soom maid?" interrupted Mrs. Baverstock wrathfully.

"Bide a bit," retorted Private Caines, wagging his head portentously; "I be a-tellin' the tale so quick as I can. Well, I did get tired o' watchin' en layin' there, starin' and sighin', so I did begin to tell en about somebody I did think a deal on then, but have a-changed my mind about now; and he did listen and laugh a bit, but I could see he were a-thinkin' about his own sweetheart all the time. So says I at last, 'I d' 'low she be a vitty maid?' 'Who?' says he, scraggling round again. 'The girl ye left behind

ye,' says I. 'Ah, to be sure,' says he. 'Yes, she be a reg'lar pictur.' 'Well, you mid tell us a bit about her,' says I; 'I've a-told 'ee all about my maid. Blue eyes, I s'pose?' Seein' as his own be so black as sloes, I reckoned 'twould come naitral to en to take up wi' a fair maid. 'Yes,' says he, 'so blue as the sky at home on a June day!' I made a good shot, I told en. 'A good bit o' colour, I d' 'low!' (Him bein' a sallow man, d'ye see.) 'A pair o' cheeks like roses,' he says; 'and a little neck as white—as the snow—nay, that's too cold —'tis more like the white of a white flower, bless her!'"

Mrs. Baverstock threw herself back in her chair and snorted.

"This here be a pretty kind o' story to tell your mother the very first day as you do come home," she said, in trembling tones. "And the poor, innocent child a-sittin' there a-listenin' to every word."

"Nay, now, ma'am, you must hear me to the end," cried Caines, bursting into a guffaw; while Dick, looking somewhat conscience-stricken, patted his mother's hand and besought her in a loud whisper not to take on.

"Lard bless 'ee, that weren't all!" exclaimed Billy. "You should ha' heerd the chap a-ravin' about her little hands, and her darlin' little feet, and I don't know what all. 'And what colour mid her hair be?' I axed him arter a bit, when he'd a-told me everythink else he could call to mind. 'I s'pose her hair be fair?' 'I s'pose so,' says he, lookin' a bit queer. 'Why, don't ye know?' says I. 'D'ye mean to say ye've forgot the colour?' 'Why,' says he, 'to tell 'ee the truth, mate, she hadn't much hair o' any kind when last I did see her.' 'Bless us!' says I. 'What be talkin' on? Ye haven't been and took up wi' a bald wold maid?' 'She bain't so very old,' says he, and he did pull blanket up o'er his mouth so as I shouldn't see en laughin'!"

Here the hero of the tale startled his mother by suddenly exploding, and she turned upon him indignantly.

"I do really think as we've a-had enough o' this here nonsense. I can't make head or tail on't. You and your friend do seem to be a-keepin' up a regular charm, and I can't make out no sense in it."

"I be very nigh done now, missis," cried Caines jubilantly; "there be but a little bit more. I did sit and stare at en when he did say his sweetheart hadn't no hair, and at last I did ax en the question straight out,

'How old mid she be when you did last see her?' 'About two months,' says he. Ho, ho, ho! 'About two months!' Yes, I've a-been away from England a good bit, an' when I left her she hadn't a hair on her head, nor yet a tooth in her mouth.' And the two of us did laugh and laugh till we did very nigh bust our bandages."

"'Twas the little maid I did mean," explained Dick, as his mother still stared gapingly from one to the other. "'Twas my little maid as I was a-thinkin' on when I did lie on that there wold stretcher what I did think I should never leave again. I did think o' she and wonder what 'ud become o' she if doctor couldn't make a job o' me. Come here, Tilly. You be daddy's little sweetheart, bain't ye?"

The child ran to him, and climbed upon his knee, and he passed his hand proudly through her mass of yellow curls.

"See here, mate; plenty o' hair here now."

He gathered up the thick locks half absently, twisting them clumsily into a kind of knot, and, throwing back his head, surveyed her pensively for a moment; then he kissed her just at the nape of the neck, and let the curls drop again with a sigh.

Mrs. Baverstock's beady eyes became momentarily dim; she did not possess by nature a very large amount of intuition, but love is a wonderful sharpener of wits.

"Dear, yes," she said. "She be the very pictur' of her mother." Then, suddenly bursting out laughing and clapping her hands together, "So that were the girl ye left behind ye!"

The Prince's Little Sweetheart

She was very young. No man had ever made love to her before. She belonged to the people,—the common people. Her parents were poor, and could not buy any wedding trousseau for her. But that did not make any difference. A carriage was sent from the Court for her, and she was carried away "just as she was," in her stuff gown,—the gown the Prince first saw her in. He liked her best in that, he said; and, moreover, what odds did it make about clothes? Were there not rooms upon rooms in the palace, full of the most superb clothes for Princes' Sweethearts?

It was into one of these rooms that she was taken first. On all sides of it were high glass cases reaching up to the ceiling, and filled with gowns and mantles and laces and jewels; everything a woman could wear was there, and all of the very finest. What satins, what velvets, what feathers and flowers! Even down to shoes and stockings,—every shade and color of stockings of the daintiest silk. The Little Sweetheart gazed breathless at them all. But she did not have time to wonder, for in a moment more she was met by attendants, some young, some old, all dressed gayly. She did not dream at first that they were servants, till they began, all together, asking her what she would like to put on. Would she have a lace gown, or a satin? Would she like feathers or flowers? And one ran this way, and one that; and among them all, the Little Sweetheart was so flustered she did not know if she were really alive and on the earth, or had been transported to some fairy land. And before she fairly realized what was being done, they had her clad in the most beautiful gown that was ever seen,—white satin with gold butterflies on it, and a white lace mantle embroidered in gold butterflies. All white and gold she was, from top to toe, all but one foot; and there was something very odd about that. She heard one of the women whispering to the other, behind her back: "It is too bad there isn't any mate to this slipper! Well, she will have to wear this pink one. It is too big; but if we pin it up at the heel she can keep it on. The Prince really must get some more slippers."

And then they put on her left foot a pink satin slipper, which was so much too big it had to be pinned up in plaits at each side, and the pearl

buckle on the top hid her foot quite out of sight. But the Little Sweetheart did not care. In fact, she had no time to think, for the Queen came sailing in and spoke to her, and crowds of ladies in dresses so bright and beautiful that they dazzled her eyes; and the Prince was there kissing her, and in a minute they were married, and went floating off in a dance, which was so swift it did not feel so much like dancing as it did like being carried through the air by a gentle wind.

Through room after room,—there seemed no end to the rooms, and each one more beautiful than the last,—from garden to garden,—some full of trees, some with beautiful lakes in them, some full of solid beds of flowers,—they went, sometimes dancing, sometimes walking, sometimes, it seemed to the Little Sweetheart, floating. Every hour there was some new beautiful thing to see, some new beautiful thing to do. And the Prince never left her for more than a few minutes; and when he came back he brought her gifts and kissed her. Gifts upon gifts he kept bringing, till the Little Sweetheart's hands were so full she had to lay the things down on tables or window-sills, wherever she could find place for them,—which was not easy, for all the rooms were so full of beautiful things that it was difficult to move about without knocking something down.

The hours flew by like minutes. The sun came up high in the heavens, but nobody seemed tired; nobody stopped,—dance, dance, whirl, whirl, song and laughter and ceaseless motion. That was all that was to be seen or heard in this wonderful Court to which the Little Sweetheart had been brought.

Noon came, but nothing stopped. Nobody left off dancing, and the musicians played faster than ever.

And so it was all the long afternoon and through the twilight; and as soon as it was really dark, all the rooms and the gardens and the lakes blazed out with millions of lamps, till it was lighter far than day; and the ladies' dresses, as they danced back and forth, shone and sparkled like butterflies' wings.

At last the lamps began, one by one, to go out, and by degrees a soft sort of light, like moonlight, settled down on the whole place; and the fine-dressed servants that had robed the Little Sweetheart in her white satin

gown took it off, and put her to bed in a gold bedstead, with golden silk sheets.

"Oh," thought the Little Sweetheart, "I shall never go to sleep in the world, and I'm sure I don't want to! I shall just keep my eyes open all night, and see what happens next."

All the beautiful clothes she had taken off were laid on a sofa near the bed,—the white satin dress at top, and the big pink satin slipper, with its huge pearl buckle, on the floor in plain sight. "Where is the other?" thought the Little Sweetheart. "I do believe I lost it off. That's the way they come to have so many odd ones. But how queer! I lost off the tight one! But the big one was pinned to my foot," she said, speaking out loud before she thought; "that was what kept it on."

"You are talking in your sleep, my love," said the Prince, who was close by her side, kissing her.

"Indeed, I am not asleep at all! I haven't shut my eyes," said the Little Sweetheart.

And the next thing she knew it was broad daylight, the sun streaming into her room, and the air resounding in all directions with music and laughter, and flying steps of dancers, just as it had been yesterday.

The Little Sweetheart sat up in bed and looked around her. She thought it very strange that she was all alone! the Prince gone,—no one there to attend to her. In a few moments more she noticed that all her clothes were gone, too.

"Oh," she thought, "I suppose one never wears the same clothes twice in this Court, and they will bring me others! I hope there will be two slippers alike, to-day."

Presently she began to grow impatient; but, being a timid little creature, and having never before seen the inside of a Court or been a Prince's sweetheart, she did not venture to stir, or to make any sound,—only sat still in her bed, waiting to see what would happen. At last she could not bear the sounds of the dancing and laughing and playing and singing any longer. So she jumped up, and, rolling one of the golden silk sheets around

her, looked out of the window. There they all were, the crowds of gay people, just as they had been the day before when she was among them, whirling, dancing, laughing, singing. The tears came into the Little Sweetheart's eyes as she gazed. What could it mean that she was deserted in this way,—not even her clothes left for her? She was as much a prisoner in her room as if the door had been locked.

As hour after hour passed, a new misery began to oppress her. She was hungry,—seriously, distressingly hungry. She had been too happy to eat the day before! Though she had sipped and tasted many delicious beverages and viands, which the Prince had pressed upon her, she had not taken any substantial food, and now she began to feel faint for the want of it. As noon drew near,—the time at which she was accustomed in her father's house to eat dinner,—the pangs of her hunger grew unbearable.

"I can't bear it another minute," she said to herself. "I must, and I will, have something to eat! I will slip down by some back way to the kitchen. There must be a kitchen, I suppose."

So saying, she opened one of the doors, and timidly peered into the next room. It chanced to be the room with the great glass cases, full of fine gowns and laces, where she had been dressed by the obsequious attendants on the previous day. No one was in the room. Glancing fearfully in all directions, she rolled the golden silk sheet tightly around her, and flew, rather than ran, across the floor, and took hold of the handle of one of the glass doors. Alas! it was locked. She tried another,—another; all were locked. In despair she turned to fly back to her bedroom, when suddenly she spied on the floor, in a corner close by the case where hung her beautiful white satin dress, a little heap of what looked like brown rags. She darted toward it, snatched it from the floor, and in a second more was safe back in her room; it was her own old stuff gown.

"What luck!" said the Little Sweetheart; "nobody will ever know me in this. I'll put it on, and creep down the back stairs, and beg a mouthful of food from some of the servants, and they'll never know who I am; and then I'll go back to bed, and stay there till the Prince comes to fetch me. Of course, he will come before long; and if he comes and finds me gone, I

hope he will be frightened half to death, and think I have been carried off by robbers!"

Poor foolish Little Sweetheart! It did not take her many seconds to slip into the ragged old stuff gown; then she crept out, keeping close to the walls, so that she could hide behind the furniture if any one saw her.

She listened cautiously at each door before she opened it, and turned away from some where she heard sounds of merry talking and laughing. In the third room that she entered she saw a sight that arrested her instantly and made her cry out in astonishment,—a girl who looked so much like her that she might have been her own sister, and, what was stranger, wore a brown stuff gown exactly like her own, was busily at work in this room with a big broom killing spiders! As the Little Sweetheart appeared in the doorway, this girl looked up, and said: "Oh, ho! there you are, are you? I thought you'd be out before long." And then she laughed unpleasantly.

"Who are you?" said the Little Sweetheart, beginning to tremble all over.

"Oh, I'm a Prince's Sweetheart!" said the girl, laughing still more unpleasantly; and, leaning on her broom, she stared at the Little Sweetheart from top to toe.

"But—" began the Little Sweetheart.

"Oh, we're all Princes' Sweethearts!" interrupted several voices, coming all at once from different corners of the big room; and, before the Little Sweetheart could get out another word, she found herself surrounded by half a dozen or more girls and women, all carrying brooms, and all laughing unpleasantly as they looked at her.

"What!" she gasped, as she gazed at their stuff gowns and their brooms. "You were all of you Princes' Sweethearts? Is it only for one day, then?"

"Only for one day," they all replied.

"And always after that do you have to kill spiders?" she cried.

"Yes; that or nothing," they said. "You see it is a great deal of work to keep all the rooms in this Court clean."

"Isn't it very dull work to kill spiders?" said the Little Sweetheart.

"Yes, very," they said, all speaking at once. "But it's better than sitting still, doing nothing."

"Don't the Princes ever speak to you?" sobbed the Little Sweetheart.

"Yes, sometimes," they answered.

Just then the Little Sweetheart's own Prince came hurrying by, all in armor from head to foot,—splendid shining armor, that clinked as he walked.

"Oh, there he is!" cried the Little Sweetheart, springing forward; then suddenly she recollected her stuff gown, and shrunk back into the group. But the Prince had seen her.

"Oh, how d' do!" he said kindly. "I was wondering what had become of you. Good-bye! I'm off for the grand review to-day. Don't tire yourself out over the spiders. Good-bye!" And he was gone.

"I hate him!" cried the Little Sweetheart, her eyes flashing, and her cheeks scarlet.

"Oh no, you don't!" exclaimed all the spider-sweepers. "That's the worst of it. You may think you do; but you don't. You love him all the time after you've once begun."

"I'll go home!" said the Little Sweetheart.

"You can't," said the others. "It is not permitted."

"Is it always just like this in this Court?" she asked.

"Yes; always the same. One day just like another,—all whirl and dance from morning till night, and new people coming and going all the time, and spiders most of all. You can't think how fast brooms wear out in this Court!"

"I'll die!" said the Little Sweetheart.

"Oh no, you won't!" they said. "There are some of us, in some of the rooms here, that are wrinkled and gray-haired. The most of the Sweethearts live to be old."

"Do they?" said the Little Sweetheart, and burst into tears.

"Heavens!" cried I, "what a dream!" as I opened my eyes. There stood the Little Sweetheart in my room, vanishing away, so vivid had been the dream. "A most extraordinary dream!" said I. "I will write it out. Some of the Princes may read it!"

Kaintuck

The sergeant's ruddy, handsome face was the only cheerful object within the prison yard as he walked up and down, crossing the sentry's beat. The yard was small—it was at the back of the gloomy brick building—and only one narrow window looked out upon it. The day was dark and dull. The soldier marching up and down, clutching his musket, looked sulky and cold, and he wondered why a man like Sergeant Heywood, who didn't have to do sentry duty, should be pacing back and forth for two hours at a stretch.

The sight of a prisoner's face at the barred window did not add to the cheerfulness of the surroundings. The face was curiously twisted and distorted by a shot that had torn through the jaw. It would have been repulsive but for the eyes—eyes pathetic, curious, patient, almost the color of the faded "butternut" clothes of the prisoner. As soon as the sergeant saw the poor face at the window he halted in his walk, and called out, cheerily, "Hello, Kaintuck!"

"Hello!" responded Kaintuck, with equal cheeriness, but in a thin, soft voice, such as might be expected to come out of his narrow chest.

"How are you to-day?" continued the sergeant.

"Purty well, considerin'," answered Kaintuck. "Las' night I didn't sleep very well. This here old jaw got to achin'; an', by golly, sergeant, she kin everlastin' ache when she starts in! Ef it hadn't ben for that terbacker you give me yesterday, I'll 'low I'd had a sorter onpleasant time. But it was a comfort, cert'n'y. Before I lit my pipe it seemed like I never was goin' ter see Polly an' the kid no more, that you blarsted Yankees was a-goin' ter whip us, spite o' General Lee, an' that this here jaw was a-goin' ter come all ter pieces. But I hadn't hardly lighted that pipe, sir, before I seen Polly an' the kid right before me, lookin' peart an' gay, an' Marse Bob had done licked you all like the devil, an' my jaw was all right, an' goin' ter stay so. That's what terbacker does for a man."

The sergeant accepted these indications of the prisoner's sympathies with great good-humor.

"I've got some more of that same brand," said he; "it affects me kinder the same way too. When I smoke, it seems to me General Grant is marchin' into Richmond, and the bands is playin' 'Yankee Doodle,' and I'm a colonel ridin' at the head of my regiment."

Kaintuck smiled at this. His smile was a mere contortion, but his deep strange eyes smiled luminously.

"I reckon it's a kinder universal comforter. Did it bring your wife and your kids right up before you?"

The sergeant was a great strapping fellow, six feet high; but at this pleasantry he blushed like a girl.

"I ain't got a wife, nor kids either; but—"

"You've got a girl, hain't you? Come, sergeant, let's hear 'bout it. It's mighty lonesome somehow in this Government hotel."

The sergeant laughed, and came closer to the window. Just then a streak of sunlight fell upon him, as he stood with one foot advanced and his stalwart arms crossed; but the prison window and Kaintuck remained in the gloom. The sergeant pulled his cap down over his eyes quite bashfully, and cleared his throat.

"Now, I'm talking confidential, Kaintuck—"

"An' you don't want me to tell the agreeable an' amusin' companions I have in here," continued Kaintuck, in the same soft, slow voice. "Fac' is, when a man's been in prison fur eighteen months, an' never had a soul but them doctors ter take no more notice of him ner a dog, excep' yourself, sergeant—"

Kaintuck stopped. The retrospect struck him unpleasantly.

"Well, I'm goin' to tell you what I ain't told even to my folks at home. I've got a girl—an' she's only twenty-one years old, an' a widder—an' the biggest rebel, b'gosh—"

The sergeant brought all this out in jerks, intermingled with suppressed laughter; and when he announced the last fact, Kaintuck joined in his hilarity.

"Blamed if women ain't the queerest lot," remarked Kaintuck, chuckling.

"You bet," assented the sergeant, still laughing. "You oughter heard that gal sass me. There she was, all by herself in a little house, with a kid about two years old, an' when I come politely to tell her I'd take care the men didn't milk her cow or take her chickens, and told her she needn't be afraid of anything, she stood in her door, with that baby in her arms, and fairly poured hot shot into me. 'I'm a soldier's widow,' she says, her eyes blazing. 'Do you think I know what it is to be afraid of *you*? Oh, if this child only was a man to shoulder his dead father's musket!' Now, you know, Kaintuck, that kind o' talk from a poor young thing all dressed in black breaks a man all up. So I just kep' my cap in my hand, and I says, 'Madam, I respect a soldier's widow, no matter which side the soldier fought on, and whether you'll agree or not, I'll make it my business to see that you'll have some kind of protection.' We was in winter quarters then, about a mile from her house. You know, men is hard to manage sometimes, and if I hadn't spoke to some of the officers, the poor thing's little all in the way of chickens and such would have gone. But I told my cap'n about it, and that her husband was killed in the rebel army, and he settled it so that not a man dared to be seen near that hen roost and cow pasture. But I don't know what she'd 'a done for wood if I hadn't looked out for her. I'd drop an armful, and knock at the door, and she'd open it. Then I'd say, 'Will you please to tell me where to put this?' 'Anywhere you like,' she'd say, and go on with her knittin' an' sewin'. It kinder nettled me at first, but she looked so young and pitiful, I couldn't get mad with her. Then somehow that young one got almighty fond of me. Every time I'd pass by that little house—and I got to goin' by purty often—he'd come toddlin' out—he was a handsome youngster—and he'd howl like tarnation if I didn't take him up in my arms. At first his mother—her name's Mary—would look black at me; but one day the little feller took my cap out of my hand, and tried to put it on his own head. 'No, sir,' says I. 'The lady yonder'll think you're poisoned if you put a blue cap on your head.' At that she laughed. I never seen her laugh before."

Kaintuck had pressed his face close to the bars of the window to hear the sergeant's story by this time, and the sergeant had advanced a step or two so that they could talk in a low voice.

"Go on," said Kaintuck. "How did you git the better of her at last?"

"I don't know," answered the sergeant, pulling his cap down a little farther yet, and showing his white teeth in a smile. "First time I told her she was pretty—by George!"

The sergeant stopped short, completely overcome by the recollection.

"Kaintuck, she don't more'n come up to my shoulder, an' she weighs about a hundred pounds, but I thought she was going to whip me then and there. I've been scared nearly to death two or three times during this unpleasantness, but I swear, Kaintuck, if that little widder wasn't the first rebel that started me on the dead run, without makin' some sort of a show of fightin'. However, I felt so mean about showing the white feather that I just determined I wasn't going to be stampeded that way again. So I braced up, an' put on my best uniform, an' went to see her again. She says, 'I'm a rebel, and I'm bound to be one always.' 'That's all right,' says I, 'bein' you're nothin' but a woman, and a mighty little one at that, and ma'am,' says I, 'this thing's goin' to be decided without the slightest reference to which side you are on.' She laughed, and then, without any sort o' warning, she turned her pretty face to the wall and begun to cry. After a while I talked to her sensible like. I says, 'Here you are alone and unprotected. How are you going to bring up that boy? What'll you do when I go away?' She turned white, and held the child in her arms. I said, 'I'll not only do for you, but I'll do for the boy besides. I've got a little money saved up, and he'll have his share of it. He shan't never know what it is not to have a father if you'll marry me, Mary.' So after a while, between crying and kissing the baby, and looking mournfully at the fire, she agreed to marry me if I'd wait till the spring, and in May I'm going to get leave—my cap'n knows all about it—and there'll be one rebel less, I believe, before long, though she does swear she'll never be anything but a rebel."

"Sergeant," said Kaintuck, "how did she take the partin'? Since you've been so free, you won't mind my askin' the question."

The sergeant hesitated, but there was something so strangely sympathetic in poor Kaintuck's humid eyes, and in the ghost of a smile that haunted his patient face, that the sergeant could not but tell. "She behaved like a little soldier till the last. I didn't half like her being so brave. But when she knew she was seein' me for the last time—well—er—I couldn't exactly tell another feller. Anyhow, she had been makin' out all along she was thinkin' about the boy, but I swear I believe she forgot all about the blessed kid. She never told me in so many words, but I kinder suspect she didn't care so much about the dead feller as she thought. It leaked out in little things, that he was kind to her, and she wasn't out of her teens, and I don't believe she was really grown up until she heard he was dead in prison, and she had to look out for herself. Howsomever," said the sergeant, pulling himself together, and laughing again—he was a good-natured fellow—"I've told you a durned sight of spooney stuff."

"An' I won't mention it to the rats, neither," answered Kaintuck.

"It's time for me to be goin'," remarked the sergeant, with a sudden accession of shamefacedness following his confidences.

"And I'm thinkin'," called out Kaintuck after him as he strode away, "that little rebel widder is goin' to git a mighty good feller for a husband!"

For four or five days the sergeant was too busy to go near the prison, but one evening at nightfall, as he was trudging along to his quarters, some one hailed him. It was the chaplain, a small, meek man, as brave as a lion. He and the sergeant had seen service together.

"Is that Sergeant Heywood?" he asked.

"Yes, sir," answered the sergeant, touching his cap.

"There's a poor fellow down at the jail"—everybody called Kaintuck a poor fellow—"who has been asking for you. He's going to die, I think."

The sergeant started. Who ever bestowed kindness and care on a prisoner that did not come to love him finally? "Why, sir?" asked the sergeant, after a pause. "What's the matter with him, sir?"

"Nothing—but death. He is rather an extraordinary fellow. His determination to live brought him through enough to kill ten men. A day or two ago he got a letter, and since then he seems equally determined to die. These cases are not so uncommon, after all. Did you never hear how easily a great strapping Russian soldier dies of homesickness or disappointment—any little thing that takes away the desire of living?"

"May be it's the Russian doctors, sir," replied the sergeant quite gravely. Fear of shot and shell he knew not, but he had been seen to turn pale at the sight of the surgeon's scalpel, and to have crawled out to parade with a shaking ague on him rather than encounter a visit from that same surgeon.

The chaplain smiled. "It's not the doctors this time, though Heaven knows I fear some of these army surgeons myself."

"I didn't think you was afraid of anything, sir, after that day at Cedar Mountain, when the officers kep' ordering you to the rear, and you wouldn't budge a peg."

A faint color crept into the chaplain's sallow face. This humble and unstudied tribute pleased him.

The sergeant was a strict disciplinarian, and knew better than to stand too long talking with his officer, so he touched his cap and moved on.

When he reached the prison, it was already dark. He walked through the long corridor until he reached Kaintuck's cell, in which a lamp—a rare luxury—was burning. To the sergeant's surprise, Kaintuck was up and dressed and sitting on the narrow bed. On his knees was a large new Bible which the chaplain had given him, but which he was not reading. His strange eyes were fixed on the door, and when the sergeant's big figure filled up the doorway, something like joy flashed into his maimed face. He got up and shuffled over to meet the sergeant.

"Why, sergeant," he cried, "I thought you had forgot me!"

"No, I ain't forgot you," answered the sergeant kindly; "but the chaplain told me you was goin' to give us the slip. You don't look like it, though."

The shadow of a smile showed itself in Kaintuck's eyes. He had a sort of primitive humor that delighted in surprises. "Well, I am," he remarked, after a moment; "I feel it. I felt it the minute I got—her letter." Something in his slow soft tone struck the sergeant and stopped the protest on his lips. Kaintuck's life had hung on a thread for the best part of two years, and since he continued to live with great obstinacy in spite of the doctors, he might now die in defiance of them. "I'll tell you," he said, coming up closer to the sergeant and speaking in a distressed and hurried voice; "I ain't told none of 'em—not even the preacher, and he is a good man if he *is* a preacher. You see, Mary—that's her name—I just called her Polly for a nickname—she's heard down in Jo Daviess County, Kaintucky, that I warn't dead, and she wrote me a letter sayin' she was comin' to me as soon as she was able—for the news kinder upset her, and she always was one of the high-strung kind—and she's goin' to bring my boy—he's named William, and that's my name—but, sergeant—"

Kaintuck seized the sergeant's arm and gripped it hard. Meanwhile at the mention of Jo Daviess County the sergeant had turned a little pale, and he grew paler and paler as Kaintuck kept on.

"Sergeant, I read that letter. It was the dutifulest letter a woman ever wrote. But—but—don't you know a woman can marry a feller, an' be dutiful an' patient, an' all the time her heart's on fire an' eatin' itself away in grief 'cause she's married the wrong feller?" He paused a moment, and then broke out desperately: "And that's the way with Mary. She wasn't but seventeen when I married her. She was too young—she didn't know. An' here I am a mock an' a misery. I ain't fit to earn a livin' for her. She'll faint dead away when she sees this here." He struck his disfigured face savagely, and did not wince with the pain. "It's better for her, an' God knows it's better for me to die. After I got that letter I felt sorter low. The doctors kem in an' talked about my havin' flutterin's at the heart, an' givin' me brandy. Did you ever hear o' brandy curing a broken heart? Sergeant, I tell you I've got a blow worsen'n that bullet that shot my jaw away. I didn't mean never to let her know I was alive unless I got cured an' made a man of again, and—and—" Kaintuck dropped weakly down on the side of the bed. The sergeant then noticed that he was of a deathly color, and scarcely able to sit

up, much less to stand. But the sergeant too wore a strange look, and his strong hands clinched behind his back were trembling.

Kaintuck, fumbling in the breast of his butternut shirt, produced a little packet done up in white letter-paper, on which something was written, and took from it a tress of chestnut hair, soft and long.

"This writin' is hers," he said, with a curious accent of pride, "and her hair is as long as this all over her head—and wavy."

The sergeant could not read the words because they danced before his eyes, but he knew the handwriting, and on his own breast reposed a lock of hair that matched the one poor Kaintuck showed with such pride. Kaintuck, in the frenzy of his suppressed excitement, did not notice the sergeant's pallor and agitation. He was wrestling furiously and blindly with his fate.

"Now don't you see," he asked, "why I don't want her to come? I ain't got long to live. What's the use o' dragging her through it? An' I can tell you, sergeant, it would be a heap easier to die now than before I seen her an' the boy."

The sergeant turned quietly and walked out of the room. He went down the corridor toward the window that overlooked the court-yard, where everything was black but for occasional patches of moonlight. The grief and horror with which he was overcome had an added sting of conscience. He was an unlettered man, and was not used to arguing morals with himself. He felt oppressed with guilt at allowing Kaintuck to go to his grave without knowing how things really were. But some instinctive common sense restrained him. It would only add a last cruelty of fate to tell him that he had been forgotten and supplanted; and the sergeant, after looking at Kaintuck closely, had adopted the chaplain's opinion that Kaintuck was not long for this world. He did not know how long he had stood at the window, when he became calmer, and returned along the corridor. The lamp was turned up in Kaintuck's cell, and there were two or three men standing over the bed.

"Sinkin' spells. Doctors workin' with him," sententiously remarked the guard to the sergeant, pausing a moment in his regular tramp.

Every day after that the sergeant came to see Kaintuck, and every day Kaintuck's face grew more pinched, and his eyes larger and more pathetic. The doctors first wheedled, then grew angry and scolded Kaintuck. Sometimes he would take the food and medicine prescribed for him, and again he would not; but all the time he traveled steadily toward the grave. Occasionally he endured furious agonies of pain from his wounded jaw, which had suddenly grown violent again; and following that he would lie for hours completely free from pain, and apparently entirely at peace. But the poor sergeant was never at peace. A trouble, a shade, that took the form of an accusing spirit, walked with him all day, and lay down by his side at night. And if Mary should come! The sergeant's heart leaped up into his throat at the bare idea. Nevertheless he haunted the prison and Kaintuck's cell, even when he was not on duty. One afternoon, when Kaintuck had been feebler than usual, sitting by his bed, something like atonement seemed possible to the sergeant.

"Kaintuck," he said, "may be you're troubled in your mind about that boy?"

"I ought to be, but I ain't," answered Kaintuck, who shared the delusion of his class that all humanity should be troubled of many things, and should cherish grief and coddle sorrow. "I say, sergeant, that 'ere little sheep-faced preacher has made me feel different about things. He sets there where you is settin', an' talks to me kinder manly. I ain't never been converted"—here he blushed—"but—but the chaplain he says 'tain't how we *feel* so much as how we do. He says God will take keer of the child, and his mother too, an' sergeant, I believe it."

The sergeant had a reverent, simple soul, and lifted his cap from his head as Kaintuck spoke God's name. "The chaplain's right," he said, putting his cap back; "and that there same little soft-spoken chaplain ain't any more afraid of bullets than General Grant or General Lee. And I've been thinkin' I'll find that boy of yours, and I'll do a good part by him."

Kaintuck's eyes glistened. "You'll have an orphan asylum soon," he said, remembering that other boy the sergeant had told him he meant to

provide for; at which the tall soldier felt his heart sink as with guilt and deception. Presently Kaintuck said:

"I think I'll go to sleep now, sergeant. What you said about lookin' out for the boy has made me feel a heap quieter. Just have an eye to him and his mother once in a while; an', sergeant, I want him to grow up a honest man; do you hear that?—a honest man."

The sergeant went out of the room and down the jail corridor. No prisoner within its walls felt more sad and dispirited than he. Down the wooden stairs he went, and out the door. At the steps outside was a little one-roomed frame building. In it at a table always sat a young officer, who examined the permits of the people who went in, and to whom the corporal of the guard reported. As the sergeant passed the open door of this little room he suddenly caught sight of a woman's figure clothed in black, standing by the table. The officer, contrary to his custom, had risen from his chair, and stood respectfully. The sergeant could not have moved to save his life. He heard the young woman's voice, as low and patient as Kaintuck's:

"I thought, sir, that he was dead. I wouldn't have forgot him or neglected him for anything. I came right away from home, 'way down in Jo Daviess County, as soon as I could."

"You will find him very much changed, madam," answered the young officer, as deferentially as if the poor young country woman was the general's wife. "He has been well attended to, as he was a quiet and well-behaved prisoner, and the doctors have worked faithfully with him."

"I know, that, sir," she replied. "Your men was very good to me when I was alone, and I thought my husband was dead, and I had nobody but my child. The cap'n looked out for me, though I was nothing but a poor woman, and—some others—"

She stopped suddenly, and the color stole into her pallid cheeks, when, looking up, she saw the sergeant standing white and dazed-looking before her. She turned a brilliant red, and then, in an instant, the color dropped out of her face as the mercury drops down in the tube. The officer caught her and placed her in the chair from which he had risen.

"Mary," cried the sergeant, coming forward and taking her hand, "I didn't know it no more than you did. Don't look at me that way. Before God, I never would have deceived you. You know I ain't written you a line since I found this out less'n a week ago."

The young officer clapped his cap on his head and ran out, closing the door after him. He saw how it was in a moment.

"Mary," said the sergeant again, after a pause, "don't you believe me?"

"Yes, I believe you," she answered, recovering herself a little and standing up. She looked so slight and pale in her black dress that the big sergeant's heart smote him with pity. "But I don't think we can see each other any more. I ain't forgetful. The only thing for me and him to do is to get back to Jo Daviess County, and for me to tend and nurse him faithful. That's the only kind o' peace I look for now. It'll be hard on you, but men gets over these things better than women."

"Do they?" cried the sergeant roughly and fiercely. "Do they, I say? I'll get over mine by trying to get to the front all the time, and hopin' some rebel bullet'll end everything. For a man who loves another man's wife has got no place on earth. He's in hell already." Her wide and frightened eyes caused the sergeant a pang of shame at his language and his violence. He hesitated a minute, and then said hurriedly: "I ask your pardon. I ask your pardon for all. Good-by," and strode out of the little room.

But at the very door he came near running over the chaplain. The sergeant's strange looks made the chaplain seize him by the arm, and then the tall man saw that the little man too was agitated. His mouth was twitching, and he looked quite shaken and nervous.

"Do you know Kaintuck is dead?" he said. "It was rather sudden at the last. I have just come from his room. He was a good, simple-hearted fellow, full of love for his wife and child. He had very strange eyes. They retained their brightness to the last."

"For God's sake," cried the sergeant, "his wife's in there!"

The door opened and she came out. She had not heard anything, and she was about to pass them both, holding her head down patiently and deprecatingly. Something in the chaplain's face stopped her, though—and she recognized his clerical attire.

"If you please," she said, "I'm—I'm going to my husband."

The chaplain took her hand and led her inside the prison door, while the sergeant walked rapidly out of the jail yard.

The widow with her child went back to Jo Daviess County. They would have fared hardly, but for some money that came every month addressed to the child. The widow took it very thankfully, for they were poor and plain people, and when the sergeant had told her that he had promised poor Kaintuck to look out for the boy, she thought quite naturally and simply that "looking out" meant wherewith to feed and clothe the child.

The sergeant did not turn up the next spring, but the spring after he came to Jo Daviess County. He was a sergeant still, and wore his worsted chevrons with a pride as honest as a major-general wears his stars. The little widow was not so pale and disheartened as she had been. The sergeant told her that he had got good quarters for her, and the boy could go to the company school, and that a non-commissioned officer's wife had a good billet—to all of which the little woman agreed, and thought it a fine thing to be married to a great tall sergeant. And soon not only she and the sergeant quite forgot poor Kaintuck, but even the little boy grew up to think that the big kind sergeant was his only father.

A Memorable Dinner

As I often have wondered whether a Christmas dinner ever was so fearfully and wonderfully constructed, and under such novel circumstances, as the one to which I sat down on Christmas Day, 1879, I have decided to relate—in the truthful, unvarnished style that one always looks for in the old railway man—the incidents in which I was fortunate enough to participate on that occasion.

That year, I was Assistant-Superintendent of the St. — R.R., and was returning on Christmas eve from the annual inspection of the line, in company with the General Manager of the road, in the private car "St. Paul," when one of the worst blizzards I ever experienced, even in that prairie country, burst upon us, and in less than an hour, had buried the track so deeply that further progress was impossible.

It was about midnight when the engine, fully five miles distant from a human habitation, and two hundred miles from our home, sulkily admitted the superior power of nature's forces and hove to.

Fortunately, for humanity's sake, there were on our special—which consisted of the engine, the baggage car, and our private car—only five souls: Charles Fielding, the manager; myself, William Thurlow; Fred Swan, the conductor; Joe Robbins, the driver; and the hero of this history, Ovide Tetreault, the French-Canadian fireman.

It was about two o'clock in the morning when we finally gave up all hope of getting along any farther, at least for some hours, and Fielding and I lay down in our berths with the hope that the storm would abate before daybreak, so that a snow-plough might reach us and clear the line, in time to enable us to reach our homes for the Christmas dinner.

But as I lay awake and listened to the shrieks of the storm, the presentiment grew upon me that the chances of our spending the best part of Christmas Day in our contracted abode were depressingly promising. These thoughts, coupled with the knowledge that our car was but poorly provisioned, and that we were without a cook—having let that functionary stop off for Christmas Day at the station beyond which we were stranded—

were in nowise conducive to my falling asleep more readily than was my wont.

I awoke a little after eight o'clock, and was just about to hurry into my clothes to see what the weather was like, when I suddenly decided there was no need of any undue haste—the roar of that festive wind could have been heard a mile away.

When I did reach the body of the car and looked out of the window, a sight met my gaze that might have made a less sinful man, than one who had spent the best part of his life on railways, give vent to comments that I am persuaded would not appear quite seemly in print. Our car was wedged well-nigh up to the windows in a huge drift, while the wind, which had whipped the harassed snow into fragments as fine as dust, caught up great clouds of the dismembered flakes, and with triumphant shrieks drove them against the panes of glass. As I stood glaring at this inspiring picture, Fielding joined me and said, as he, too, feasted his eyes on the scene: "A villainous day! we shall be lucky if we get home by midnight. A lovely way to spend Christmas shut in like rats in a trap! If we only had our cook to do up the little food we have, it would not be so hard on us."

This last reflection was uttered in such a doleful key that I had considerable difficulty in not laughing outright, for my superior officer was a man of imposing breadth, and I knew his one weakness was the love of a good meal. The contemplation of the loss of his Christmas dinner had made him forget his usual blunt, hopeful tone of speech, and adopt this dismal strain.

During the long pause which followed, I knew that he was casting anxious glances at me. Finally he said, insinuatingly: "Er—er—William, during all the years that I have known you, it never occurred to me to ask you if you knew anything about cooking. But, of course, it is a foolish question to put to the assistant-superintendent of a railroad," he added deprecatingly.

I was sorry to have to admit that my education in the culinary art had been sorely neglected.

It must have been about two hours after partaking of our Christmas breakfast, which consisted of bread and butter, cheese and tea, that we had managed somehow to scrape together, that Fielding said to me: "Why, William, there is the conductor, and the driver, and the fireman—perhaps one of them knows enough to roast that beef in the larder. Suppose you go and interview them. There is enough meat there to make a dinner for the lot of us."

The suggestion struck me as being a good one, and I wondered that I had not thought of questioning them about the matter earlier in the morning. I soon had the trio marching behind me into our car, to be examined as to what they knew of the now much-to-be-desired art of cooking.

With divers sincere regrets, the conductor protested that he had not the slightest knowledge of this housewifely accomplishment. But old Joe Robbins, the driver, a sterling, dogged Yorkshire man, and one of our oldest employés to whose speech still clung a goodly smattering of the Yorkshire dialect, raised Fielding's sinking hopes by saying that although he did not know how to roast, he was pretty well posted in the art of frying. He further explained, and this time to the gratification of us all, that he had in a box, on the tender of the engine, a ten-pound turkey that he had bought up the line to take home for Christmas, and which we were quite welcome to. The only drawback to the bird was that it was frozen as hard as a rock, and would probably take a lot of thawing out. If we wished, however, he would do his best to thaw it and give us fried turkey for dinner.

Fielding, after declaring that he would not forget to give the man who acted as cook that day a souvenir when he got back to town, was just about to accept the kind offer, when Ovide Tetreault, the French-Canadian fireman, a dark-skinned, comical-looking little fellow, pushed past Robbins, and said eagerly to Fielding and myself, in amusing broken English: "Messieurs, I'm know how for mak de rost turkey, and rost turkey she's goodder dan de fry turkey. And I'm know, too, how for mak—how for mak —" He rubbed his pointed little chin vigorously to jog his laggard memory, and then continued, triumphantly: "*Ah, oui! ah, oui!* how for mak what de English call de Creesmis plum-puddin', and if you lak I will do de cookin' for you."

Turning to me, Fielding said in a low voice: "Do you really think that queer-looking specimen knows more about cooking than old Robbins? Would it be safe to let him try and roast the turkey? It would never do to have it spoiled, you know."

Now, from the eager manner in which the little chap had spoken, he impressed me, in spite of his insignificant appearance, with being less commonplace than he looked, and believing that our dinner, under his generalship, would be a much better one than old Robbins would be likely to provide, I strongly urged Fielding to bestow the commission of cook upon my favorite. "What possible reason can he have for saying he can roast turkeys and boil plum-puddings if he cannot?" I urged as a clincher. Of course he had no good argument to meet such a question, and so, turning to Ovide, he said: "All right, my good fellow, go ahead, and give us roast turkey and plum-pudding. I am glad that after all we shall not be without a Christmas dinner."

During this conference Robbins had been eyeing his fireman with growing disfavor, and as Fielding ceased, he strode suddenly up to Ovide and said to him with ill-suppressed wrath: "Before thou begins thy duties as cook, it is only right that thou shouldst say how thou larned to cook, and just how much thou knows about it. For my part, I believe thou knows nought about it; I know thee and thy foolish way of thinking that thou canst do anything thou hast seen anyone else do."

Now, as I knew the old driver heartily disliked his little fireman—whom he always dubbed an intruding foreigner—and had more than once reported him to me on the ground of incompetency, I concluded his remarks were not wholly disinterested, and was about to reprove him, when Ovide, with much heartiness, replied: "Dat's not your bizness to ax me question lak dat; I'm not on de engine now." He then raised his shoulders commiseratingly and continued: "You not be 'fraid, Monsieur Robbin; for when I rost dat turkey and boil dat puddin' you will find her so good dat you will eat more dan de odders."

The dogged old driver was now too angry to be influenced by our amused smiles, and turning contemptuously away from Ovide, he looked to us to press his demand for our cook's credentials.

"Oh, I am sure, Robbins, he will cook the dinner all right. And then you know," I added reprovingly, "this is Christmas Day, and there should be no hard feeling among us."

My reply only the more incensed our doughty old engineer. He pointed prophetically at the now thoroughly defiant Ovide, and said, "I suppose I'm interfering; but, mark my words, that foreigner there'll make you before the day's out forget all about that motto of peace and good-will." His prophetic arm fell to his side, and he seated himself in a position from which he could command a good view of the little kitchen at the end of the passage, where his watchful eyes never failed to fasten on Ovide as he swaggered about, arrayed in our regular cook's long, white apron.

For the next two hours I thought very little of Ovide, my attention being occupied by a game in which Fielding, the conductor and I were engaged.

Suddenly Fielding exclaimed, "Gracious, William, but this car is hot!" I myself had been uncomfortably warm for some time, and had been dimly conscious, too, of the conductor frequently wiping his face, and casting anxious glances in the direction of the kitchen, whence came blasts of hot air heavily laden with the appetizing odor of roast turkey.

Involuntarily I glanced over at Robbins, who was still on guard, although pretending to read a newspaper, and as I caught the grim look of satisfaction on his profile, doubts as to the ability of our new cook for the first time stole over me, and I made my way out to the kitchen.

The moment I opened the door, and stepped into Ovide's new sanctum, I thought the last great day of conflagration had surely come, and that the elements were melting with fervent heat. Never before had I experienced such withering heat and choking smoke as proceeded from that little range, nor such dense vapor as came from the mouth of the boisterous kettle upon it—many a locomotive would have been proud to spout forth such a body of steam!

Finally my half-blinded eyes found out Ovide, who looked truly like an emissary of the evil one among it all, as he stood with his wet scarlet

face, his feet buried in turkey feathers, and his arms up to the elbows in a bowl of flour.

"Ovide!" I called, faintly.

When he saw me, a pleased, triumphant look lit up his face.

"Do you want to burn down the car?" I asked, shortly, when I got him into the passage.

"Oh, no fear for dat," he answered in a somewhat patronizing tone. "You know," he went on, good-naturedly, "big turkey can't be cook if not have pretty good fire. But I'll open de window and den de fire she'll all go out. For me, you know I'm not mind de heat, for I'm used to dat when I fire de engine."

"But surely, Ovide, you will burn the turkey all up," I insisted, in a milder tone—for, as I have already stated, I was in no wise an authority on cooking, and from the patronizing way in which he spoke, I began to feel that I had been interfering unnecessarily.

"Well," he replied ponderingly, "p'rhaps she do a little too quick, and I'll tak her out; aldo she's only be in a few minute."

As I glanced at his flour-bedecked arms, he said, "Oh, yes, I'm find de raisin, and de curran, and de peel, and lots powder, dat makes de flour come big, and I'm mix dem all together when you come in, and we going to have fine Creesmis puddin' sure. It's too bad, do, dat I find a hole she's born in de bottom of de sospan, so dat I must put de puddin' in de kettle, which has not got big mouth; but she's pretty big around de middle, so I suppose de puddin' she's cook just as well dare."

I was too bewildered by all this detail to pay much attention to what he was saying about the smallness of the kettle's mouth; but I remembered it vividly afterwards.

Nodding gaily to me, he hurried back to the oven, from which the blue odorous smoke was still pouring. I lingered long enough to see him take the turkey out of it, stand it on the shelf in the corner, and then open the window.

As I passed Robbins, he let his paper flutter to his knee, and said, meaningly: "I hope yon chap, sir, don't think he's still firing on the engine."

As I smilingly shook my head and passed on, a presentiment of approaching disaster took possession of me—so that the recollection of the speaker's prophecies of evil regarding our cook did not come back with that keen sense of humor one would have expected.

When I reached Fielding's side, he said anxiously, "I hope he is getting along all right, William." As I noted his anxiety, and the hungry expression of his face, I answered with a glibness which I was far from feeling, that things were getting along swimmingly. I was now beginning to feel such a weight of responsibility in the success of the dinner that I sincerely wished I had not taken such an active interest in the appointment of the cook.

About an hour later, when we ceased our game, I noticed the odor of roast turkey was no longer prevalent; so with apprehensive heart, though nonchalant air, I made my way over to the kitchen again, and was just in time to see Ovide snatch the turkey—which now looked cold and forlorn enough—from the shelf and shove it into the still fervent oven, and to hear him mutter, "Dat's too bad I'm forgot to put you back for so long."

He did not see me until he had closed the oven door, and then he said, joyously, pointing to the kettle: "De puddin' she's in dare, and she's nearly all done now, and in fifteen or twenty minute more de dinner she's all be ready."

I suppose if I had not seen the bird's entrance into the oven for the second time, the announcement of the early approach of the festivities would have allayed some of my apprehensions, and perhaps have afforded me a little of the satisfaction Fielding and the conductor experienced when they heard the news. The effect of the tidings upon old Robbins, however, was tantalizing in the extreme. He threw his paper to one side, rested his elbows on his knees, and holding up his grizzly chin with his hands, began softly to whistle a monotonous, soul-disturbing air.

Ovide was true to his word, for scarcely had the twenty minutes elapsed, when in he bustled, pulled the table into the centre of the car, set it

fairly well, after a number of amusing blunders, and then drawing up the chairs, said, with great gusto: "Now, Messieurs, I'm go and get de dinner."

As we seated ourselves, Fielding said, with a satisfaction that comes back to me vividly as I pen these words: "Well, William, I am glad it is ready; I never remember being so hungry." The kindly look which he bestowed on Ovide as he came in with the smoking turkey will also never be difficult to conjure up. But the moment my eyes fell upon that unfortunate bird, my heart began to beat with renewed apprehensions. Never before had I seen such an ill-favored, uninviting-looking fowl placed upon a table; its naturally white, smooth skin was now as seamy, black and arid-looking as the mouth of an ancient crater.

Covertly I glanced at Fielding to see what effect this steaming, yet mummified-looking object had upon him. My worst fears were verified: the complacent expression had fled, and was succeeded by a look in which consternation, anger and amazement were all blended.

The short, trying silence was broken by a rasping cough from Robbins, and then Fielding said, in a constrained tone, as he whetted his knife: "Well, this animal looks as though it had been through the fiery furnace created by Nebuchadnezzar for the undoing of the three Israelites."

Ovide, who was standing complacently behind Fielding's chair, not understanding the allusion, and thinking that he was called upon to say something, said brightly, "Oh, yes, sir, dat turkey is de finest turkey I never see."

Now, I had known Fielding, on numerous occasions, to laugh heartily at a much less amusing blunder, but on this occasion I sought his usually expressive face in vain for even the ghost of a smile. To add to my annoyance and the constraint of the situation, old Robbins found it necessary to again loudly clear his troublesome throat.

To save himself from making an angry reply, Fielding somewhat viciously commenced operations on the turkey, and attempted to carve off a leg; but in some unaccountable manner the knife came to a sudden halt as soon as it had pierced the dark skin. This unlooked-for interruption brought a puzzled look into Fielding's face; but he was a man not easily daunted by

anything, and thinking that he had somehow come across a bone hitherto unknown to him in a turkey's anatomy, he twisted the bird round and confidently began the dissection of the other leg. The result was equally disheartening; the blade went a little below the skin, and then refused to budge.

Poor Fielding! His patience was by this time pretty well exhausted, and turning to the now anything but jubilant Ovide, said grimly: "In the name of all that is good, man, what is the matter with this turkey?"

He had gone however, to the wrong fount, for information this time, as Ovide wonderingly shook his head, and said, "Dat is de queerest ting I'm never see, sir."

The angry words on Fielding's lips were prevented by a low comprehensive laugh from old Robbins, who said, as he pointed satirically at his fireman, "Oh, aye; oh, aye; thou knows how to cook; thou does, of course thou does." Then turning to Fielding he said, with a side glance at me: "That bird, sir, has nobbut had its hide cooked, and all beneath it is frozen."

Even before Fielding, to verify this startling statement, had seized the knife, and, laying open the skin, exposed to view the partly frozen flesh, the whole miserable catastrophe was clear to my mind. I recalled how I had borne down on Ovide soon after he had put the bird for the first time into the blazing oven; how, in deference to my fears, he had taken it out and stood it on the shelf—when its skin, of course, could only have been scorched—where it had remained over an hour while he was superintending the construction and cooking of the pudding; and, finally, how the prevaricating fellow—whom I knew understood little more about cooking than I did—must have concluded, from the cinder-like appearance of the skin when he took it out of the oven the second time, after another twenty minutes' scorching, that it was cooked to the very marrow.

"Well!" ejaculated Fielding, letting his knife and fork fall noisily on the table, and turning to our guilty-looking cook, "of all the pure—"

But I am sure, the reader will agree with me that under such trying circumstances, my friend should not now have recorded against him, in cold print, every word he uttered on that occasion.

When Fielding had somewhat relieved his feelings and sat down again, Ovide, in his ludicrous English, tried to throw the blame for what had happened upon the stove, which, he explained, burned much more zealously than he wanted it to; but his lame excuses were cut short by Fielding telling him to take the thing away.

Ovide, however, was a difficult subject to silence, and said apologetically, as he took up the platter: "It's vary much too bad, sir, dat I'm forgot to mak her freeze out before I'm put her in de oven. But de puddin', sir,"—with a sudden revival of his old self-confidence—"no danger of de same trouble with her; I'm sure she's cook vary well all de way over."

Somewhat mollified by the outlook of getting a little of something to eat, Fielding replied somewhat less shortly, "Well, hurry up and bring it along."

As we silently waited for him to return, we heard him noisily lift the kettle containing the now doubly precious pudding off the stove; but scarcely had he done so when he uttered an amazed cry, and a few moments later hurried up to the table again, the big kettle in his hand and his eyes fairly bulging with excitement.

"See! Monsieur," he exclaimed, almost superstitiously, as he halted at my side and pointed to the mouth of the kettle, "see de size dat puddin' she's now! When I'm put her in she's so small dat she's go in easy; but now look! she's swell, and swell, and swell till she's fill all de kettle inside, and now she's tree times too big for de mouth, and she won't come out."

I glanced down, and true enough, the pudding had assumed alarming proportions. Little wonder the problem of getting the thing intact out of the kettle's small mouth had caused him such woful distress.

"Well," I said impatiently, "go pour off the water and take it out in sections; if there is more pudding than you expected, so much the better; there seems little chance of us getting anything else to eat."

As he was scudding away to carry out my instructions, Robbins, whose sharp eyes had seen the freak in the kettle, said to Ovide in an undertone, "Thou hast not forgotten, lad, to take the frost out of that, anyway."

After a very brief absence, Ovide hurried back again, bearing aloft the most marvellous pudding human eyes, I am persuaded, ever rested upon. Apart from the pitiful manner in which it had been rent and torn asunder, its complexion was such as to attract the most lively interest—no chronic sufferer from jaundice ever sported such a gorgeous yellow. The mystery of its unwonted complexion was solved the moment he laid it on the table: the car was permeated with the rank odor of baking powder.

Out of pure curiosity, I put a piece of the pudding into my mouth. It was something awful! A spoonful of pure baking powder could not have tasted much worse. It had been only partially cooked, too.

Fielding gave Ovide one look, and then, too full for speech, he pushed back his chair and strode to the other end of the car.

Slowly I leaned back in my chair and fixed my eyes on the face of the now thoroughly craven-looking Ovide. "What made you tell us you knew how to cook?" I asked, trying hard to speak without anger, but in utter failure. The cravings of the inner man, just then, were strong upon me.

After all the fellow was not without some redeeming trait, for he made a clean breast of it. "It is dis way," he began remorsefully, "when I'm tak de job for cook to-day I'm tink, for sure, I know de way for do it. De reason I get idea like dat, is this way: When I'm be little boy and sit in de kitchen and see my mudder bake de bread, and boil de puddin', and rost de meat, I'm say to myself, many time, 'Ovide, you can do little easy ting like dat, just so well as she can.' I'm ax my mudder, too, many time to let me try and mak de dinner, but she laugh loud and say, 'Ovide, you just lak all de boys and lots of men too, for dey all tink dat it's just so easy for de woman to cook de food as it is for dem to eat it.' And den she laugh some more, and say dat all de men tink dat what de womans do is noting at all."

As he paused, I had no small difficulty in preserving the severity of my countenance, owing to certain recollections of thoughts I had indulged

in when a boy—and, I must admit, a pretty big one, too—when I had sat and watched my mother cook. From the way Fielding, at the other end of the car, put his hands into his pockets, I got the impression that conscience was hard at work with him, too.

"Even after I'm be away from home all dese years," continued Ovide, "I'm still have dat feeling dat I can cook just so well as she can; and so when I'm come into de car to-day and hear Mr. Fielding say dat he want cook, and say dat he will give a souvenir, and when I'm see, too, dat engine-driver man Robbin, dare, dat I'm not lak at all, and who I tink not know how for cook and yet going for get de job—I'm just tink dat a good chance she's come for me to please de bosses and make somethin' good for myself, and so I'm come straight out, and say I'm de best man for de job. And dat's all de truth."

He had been slowly edging his way to the passage leading to the door, and as he reached it he continued regretfully, "If I'm only not forget to freeze out dat turkey before I'm put her in de oven, and tink too not to put nearly cupful bakin' powder in de puddin', everyting she's be all right den, sure." As he concluded he turned abruptly down the passage, and fled out of our car into the baggage-car, with Robbins' rasping cough in his ears.

Half an hour later, thanks to old Robbins' skill, we sat down to fried turkey, boiled potatoes, bread and butter, and tea.

The great French-Canadian cook gladly ate his portion of the banquet in the baggage-car, for no amount of persuasion could make him come to the table with us.

Twelve hours later we reached our homes.

On New Year's Day, a bulky blue envelope was handed to Ovide. As it bore the stamp of the General Manager's office, he opened it with fear and trembling, for he was sure that it contained his dismissal. I shall not attempt to describe his gratification when he found it contained a handsome silver watch, on the inside of which was neatly engraved a belligerent-looking turkey. The note from Fielding, accompanying the gift, read as

follows: "May the souvenir bring as many pleasant memories to the receiver as the memory of Christmas Day, 1879, is sure to bring the donor."

Floromond and Frisonette

Floromond and Frisonnette, who were giddy with a sense of wealth when they acquired three rooms, and had flowers growing on their own balcony, and sat upon chairs that they had actually bought and paid for, held a reception one fine day. The occasion was a christening. Floromond and Frisonnette were, of course, monsieur and madame Jolicoeur, and they dwelt in the part of Paris that was nearest to Arcadia. Among those present were monsieur Tricotrin, the unadmired poet, monsieur Pitou, the composer of no repute, monsieur Lajeunie, whose stirring romances so rarely reached a printing office, and monsieur Sanquereau, the equally distinguished sculptor.

Though the company were poor in pocket, they were rich in benevolence, and since the dearth of coppers forbade silver mugs, they modelled their gifts upon the example of the good fairies. Advancing graciously to the cradle, the bard bestowed upon the female infant the genius of poesy: "Epics, and odes," he declared, "shall fall from her lips like the gentle dew from Heaven." "And, symphonies," said the musician, "she shall drop as nimbly as the newly rich drop needy friends." That she might be equipped more fully yet for the stress of modern life, the novelist endowed her with the power of surpassing narrative, while the sculptor, in his turn, contributed to her quiver the pre-eminence of Praxiteles.

Then Frisonnette hung over her baby, saying, "And one boon, besides: let her marry her sweetheart and always remember that a husband's love is better than an ermine cloak!"—an allusion which moved Floromond to such tenderness that he forthwith took his wife in his arms, regardless of us all; and which reminded your obedient servant of their story.

When Floromond beheld her first, she was in a shop window—the most tempting exhibit that a shop window had displayed to him, in all his five-and-twenty years. If he had stayed in the quarter where he belonged, it would not have happened. It was early on a spring morning, and she was posing a hat, for the enticement of ladies who would tread the rue La

Fayette later in the day. Floromond, sunning himself like a lord, though he was nothing better than a painter, went on to the Garden of the Tuileries, noting how nicely the birds sang, and thinking foolish thoughts. "Had I a thousand-franc note in my pocket, instead of an importunate note from a washer-woman," ran his reverie, "I would go back and buy that hat; and when she asked me where it was to be sent, I would say, 'I do not know your name and address, mademoiselle.' Then, having departed, without another word, leaving her speechless with amazement and delight, I should never see her any more—until, not too long afterwards, we found ourselves, by accident, in the same omnibus. Ciel! how blue her eyes were."

And, though he did not omit to reprove himself, in the most conscientious manner, and the weather changed for the worse, his admiration drew him to the rue La Fayette, at the same hour, every day.

Frisonnette's demeanour, behind the plate glass, was propriety itself. But she could not be unconscious that the young man's pace always slackened in the downpour, as he approached madame Aureole's—she could not be insensible of the homage of his gaze. That Tuesday morning, when, dripping, he bowed, his salutation was so respectful that she felt she would be inhuman to ignore it.

So the time came when they trod the rue La Fayette together, making confessions to each other, after the shop shut.

"I used to wonder at first whether you noticed me as I went by," he told her wistfully.

"I noticed you from the beginning," she owned, "you have such a funny walk. The day that you were late——"

"My watch was in pawn. Sapristi, how I raced! It makes me perspire to think of it."

"I took five minutes longer than usual to dress the window, waiting for you."

"If I had guessed! And you didn't divine that I came on purpose?"

She shook her head. "I used to think you must be employed somewhere about."

"What! you took me for a clerk?" asked the artist, horrified.

"Only at the start. I soon saw you couldn't be that—your clothes were too shabby, and your hair was so long."

"I could have wished you to correct the impression by reason of my air of intellect. However, to talk sensibly, could the prettiest girl in France ever care for a man who had shabby clothes, and a funny walk?"

"Well, when she was beside him, she would not remark them much," said Frisonnette shyly. "But I do not think you should ask me conundrums until you have talked politics with my aunt; I feel sure she would consider it premature."

"Mademoiselle," said Floromond, "I am rejoiced to hear that your aunt has such excellent judgment. Few things would give me greater pleasure than to agree with her politics as soon as you can procure me the invitation."

And one day Floromond and Frisonnette descended the steps of a certain mairie arm in arm—Frisonnette in a white frock and a nutter—and the elderly gentleman in the *salle des mariages*, to whom brides were more commonplace than black-berries, looked after this bride with something like sentiment behind his pince-nez. A policeman at the gate was distinctly heard to murmur, "What eyes!" And so rapidly had the rumour of her fairness flown, that there were nearly as many spectators on the sidewalk as if it had been a marriage of money, with vehicles from the livery stables.

The bride's aunt wore her *moire antique*, with coral bracelets, and at breakfast in the restaurant she wept. But, as was announced on the menu, wedding couples and their parties were offered free admission to the Zoological Gardens; pianos were at the disposal of the ladies; and an admirable photographer executed GRATUITOUSLY portraits of the couples, or a group of their guests. At the promise of being photographed in the *moire antique*, a thing that had not occurred to her for thirty years, the old lady recovered her spirits; and if Tricotrín, in proposing the health of the happy pair, had not digressed into tearful reminiscences of a blighted love-story of his own, there would have been no further pathetic incident.

Floromond and Frisonnette, like foreigners more fashionable, "spent their honeymoon in Paris," for, of course, Frisonnette had to keep on selling Auréole's hats. Home was reached by a narrow staircase, which threatened never to leave off, and after business hours the sweethearts—as ridiculously enchanted with each other as if they had never been married—would exchange confidences and kisses at a little window that was like the upper half of a Punch and Judy show, popped among the chimney-pots of the slanting tiles as an afterthought.

"It is good to have so exalted a position," said Frisonnette; "there is no one nearer than the angels to overlook us. But I pray you not to mention it to the concierge, or our rent will soon be as high as our lodging. The faint object that you may discern below, my Floromond, is Paris, and the specks passing by are people."

"They must not pass us by too long, however, Beloved," said Floromond; "I am a married man and awake to my responsibilities. It would not suit me, by any manner of means, to share you with millinery all your dear little life. More than ever I have resolved to be eminent, and when the plate glass can never separate us again, you shall have dessert twice a day, and a *bonne* to wash the dishes."

"My child," murmured Frisonnette, "come and perch on my lap, while I talk wisdom to you, for you are very young, and you have been such a little while in Paradise that you have not learnt the ways of its habitants. It chagrins you that you cannot give me dessert, and domestics, and a cinema every Saturday night. But because I worship you, my little sugar husband, because every moment that I pass away from you, among the millinery, seems to me as long as the rue de Vaugirard, I do not think of such things when we are together. To be in your arms is enough. Life looks to me divine—and if I find anything at all lacking in our heavens it is merely a second cupboard. Now, since you are too heavy for me, you may jump down, and we will reverse the situation."

"I have strange tidings to reveal to you," said Floromond, squeezing the breath out of her—"I adore you, Frisonnette!"

They remained so blissful that many people were of the opinion that Providence was neglecting its plain duty. Here was a thriftless painter

daring to marry a girl without a franc, and finding the course of wedlock run as smooth as if he had been a prosperous grocer with branches in the suburbs! The example set to the Youth of the quarter was shocking. And a year passed, and two years passed, and still the angels might see Floromond and Frisonnette kissing at the attic window.

Then one afternoon it happened that a French beauty, hastening along the rue La Fayette with tiny, toppling steps, as if her bust were too heavy for her feet, found herself arrested by a toque on view at Auréole's—and entering with condescension, was still more charmed by the assistant who attended to her. The chance customer was no one less important than the wife of Finot—Finot the dressmaker, Finot the Famous—and at dinner that night, when they had reached the cheese, she said to the great man:

"My little cabbage, at a milliner's of no distinction I have come across a blonde who could wipe the floor with every mannequin we boast. She is as chic as a model, and as bright as a sequin; she is just the height to do justice to a *manteau*; her neck would go beautifully with an evening gown; and she has hips that were created for next season's skirt."

"Let her call!" said the great man, adding a few drops of kirsch to his *petit suisse*.

"She would be good business, I assure you," declared the lady; "she talked me into taking a toque more than twice the price of the one I went in for—*me*! Well, I shall have to find a pretext for speaking to her—I must go back and see if there is another hat that I care to buy."

"It is not necessary," replied her husband; "go back and complain of the one you bought."

So the lady talked to Frisonnette in undertones, and Frisonnette listened to her in bewilderment, not quite certain whether she was twirling to the top of her ladder, or being victimised by a diabolical hoax. And the following forenoon she passed by appointment through imposing portals that often she had eyed with awe. And Finot, having satisfied himself that she had brains as well as grace—for they are very wide of the mark who think of his pampered mannequins as elegant mechanical toys—signified his august approval.

Frisonnette went home and described the splendours of the place to Floromond, who congratulated her, with a misgiving that he tried to stifle. And later on she told him of the dazzling déjeuners that were provided, repasts which she vowed stuck in her throat, because he was not there to share them. And, not least, she sought to picture to him the gowns that she wore and sold. O visions of another world! There are things for which the vocabulary of the Académie Française would be inadequate. Such clothes looked too celestial to be touched. But she was a woman. Though her head was spinning, as Finot's mirrors reflected her magnificence, though she was admiring herself inimitably, she accomplished so casual an air that one might have thought she had never put on anything cheaper in her life.

And, being a woman, she did not suffer from a spinning head very long; she soon became acclimatised.

In the daytime, Frisonnette ate delicate food, and sauntered through stately show-rooms, robed like a queen—and in the evening she turned slowly to her little old frock, and supped on scraps in the garret. And now her laughter sounded seldom there. Gradually the contentment that had found a heaven under the tiles changed to a petulance that found beneath them nothing to commend. Her gaze was sombre, and often she sighed. And the misgiving that Floromond had tried to stifle knocked louder at his heart.

By and by the little old frock was discarded and thrust out of view, and she wore costumes that made the garret look gaunter still, for with her increased salary, and commissions, she could afford such things. Floromond knew no regret when she ceased to speak of bettering their abode instead—his pride had revolted at the thought of astonishing their neighbours on his wife's money—but the smart costumes made her seem somebody different in his eyes, and moodily he felt that it was presumption for a fellow in such a threadbare coat to try to kiss her.

"What a swell you are nowadays!" the poor boy would say, forcing a smile.

And Frisonnette would scoff. "A swell? This rag!" as she recalled with longing the gorgeous toilettes that graced her in the show-room.

One treasure there she coveted with all her soul. It was an ermine cloak, so beautiful that simply to stroke it thrilled her with ecstasy. Only once had she had an opportunity of luxuriating in its folds; under its seductive caress she had promenaded, on the Aubusson carpet, for the allurements of an *américaine*, who, after all, had chosen something else. The mannequin used to think that she who possessed it should be the proudest woman in the world, and twice the painter had been wakened to hear her murmuring rhapsodies of it in her sleep.

"If I could sell my 'Ariadne' and carry her away to some romantic cottage among the meadows!" he would say to himself disconsolately. "Then she would see no more of the fangles and folderols that have divided us—she would be my sweetheart, just as she used to be."

But the best that he could do was to sell his pot-boilers; and a romantic cottage among the meadows looked no nearer to his purse than a corner mansion in the avenue Van-Dyck.

That the fangles and folderols had indeed divided them was more apparent still as time went on—so much so that frequently he passed the evening at a *café*, to avoid the heartache of watching her repine. But it was really waste of coppers, for he thought of the change in her all the while; and when he lagged up the high staircase, on his return, he was remembering, at every step, the Frisonnette who formerly had run to greet him at the top.

"You are a devoted companion," she would remark bitterly, as he entered. "What do you imagine I do with myself, in this hole, all the evening, while you stay carousing outside?"

"I imagine you sit turning up your nose at everything, as you do when I am with you," he would answer, hiding his pain.

Then Frisonnette would cry that he was a bear; and Floromond would retort that her own temper had not improved, which was certainly true. And after she had exclaimed that it was false, and stamped her foot furiously to prove it, she would burst into tears, and wonder why she remained with a man who, not content with forsaking her for *cafés*, came home and calumniated her nose, and her temper besides.

Meanwhile Finot had been contemplating her performances on the Aubusson carpet with rising respect. His versatile mind was now projecting the winter advertisements, and he determined to entrust to his best blonde one of those duties which, from time to time, rendered the luckiest of his mannequins objects of unspeakable envy to all the rest. Finot's advertisements were conducted on a scale becoming to a firm whose annual profits ran into millions of francs.

"Mon enfant," he said to her, "you have been a very good girl. And though you may think you are rewarded royally already, as indeed you are"—and here followed an irritating dissertation upon the softness of her job, to which she listened with impatience—"I am preparing a treat for you of the first order. How would it please you to travel, for a couple of months or so, a little later on?"

"To travel, I?" she stammered.

"You and one of the other young ladies. Monte Carlo, Vienna, Rome?"

"Rome?" ejaculated Frisonnette, who had never dreamed of reaching any other "Rome" than the one on the Métropolitain Railway.

"Mademoiselle Piganne would contrast most effectively with your tints, I think?" He screwed up his eyes. "Y-e-s, we could hardly evolve a colour scheme more delicious than you and mademoiselle Piganne! Whatever capitals we may decide on, you will stay at the hotels of the highest standing; all matters like that you will do best to leave to the judgment of the chaperon in attendance on you both, otherwise you might have the unfortunate experience to find yourself in an hotel not exclusively patronised by the cream of Society. Your personal wardrobe, for which you will be supplied with from twelve to fourteen trunks, will consist of those creations of my art which best express my soul, and your affair will be to attract sensational attention to them, while preserving an attitude of the severest propriety. That is imperative, remember! No English or American mother, with her daughters beside her, must for a single instant doubt that you are morally deserving of her closest stare. An open carriage in the park, where the climate permits—a stage box at the opera, when the audience is most brilliant, will, of course, suggest themselves to your mind. But, again,

the duenna and the man-servant will organise the programme as skilfully as they will look the parts. All that will be required of you is a display, brilliant and untiring; the rest will be done by others. Every woman everywhere will instruct her maid to find out all about you, and your own maid—an employee of the firm in a humble capacity—will have orders to whisper that you are a princess, travelling incognito, and that your dresses come from Me."

Frisonnette could do no more than pant, "I will speak about it at home, monsieur, at once!" And because she foresaw with resentment that Floromond's approval would be far from warm, she broached the subject to him very diffidently.

At the back of the little head that Finot's finery had turned, she knew well that if her "bear" betook himself too often to cafes, it was mortified love that drove him to them; so she made haste to tell him: "It might be the best thing for you, to get rid of me for a couple of months—I should return in a much better humour and you would find me quite nice again."

"You think so, Frisonnette?" said Floromond, with a sad smile.

"What do you mean?" she asked, paling.

"I mean," he sighed, "that after the 'brilliant display,' it is not our ménage under the tiles that would seem to you idyllic repose. Heaven knows it goes against the grain to beg a sacrifice, but if you accept such luxury, I feel that you would never bear our straits together again. Do not deceive yourself, little one; you would be leaving me, not for two months, but for ever!"

Deep in her consciousness had lurked this thought too, and she turned from him in guilty silence. "You are fond of me, then," she muttered at last, "in spite of all?"

"If I am fond of you!" groaned Floromond. "Ah, Frisonnette, Frisonnette, there is no moment, even when you are coldest, that I would not give my life for you. I curse the poverty that prevents me tearing you from these temptations and making you entirely mine once more. If I were rich! It is I who would give you boxes at the opera, and carriages in the

park; I would wrap you in that ermine cloak, and pour all the jewels of Boucheron's window in your lap."

"I will not go!" she cried, weeping. "Forgive me, forgive the way I have behaved. I have been wicked, yes! But I repent, it is ended—I will not go!"

And that night she was proud and joyful to think she would not go. It was only in the grey morning that her heart sank to remember it.

"I must decline," she said to Finot hesitatingly. "I have a husband. I—I could not take my husband?"

"Mon enfant, your husband would not grudge you the little holiday without him, one may be sure."

It was like being barred from Eden. "And the ermine cloak," she faltered, "could I take the ermine cloak?"

The tempter smiled. "One cannot doubt that, among fourteen trunks, there would be room for the ermine cloak," he told her suavely.

One November evening when Floromond came in, his wife was not there. He supposed she had been detained in the show-room—until he groped for a match; and then, in the dark, his hand touched an envelope, stuck in the box. He trembled so heavily that, before he could light the lamp, he seemed to be falling through an eternity of fear.

He read: "I am leaving you because I am frivolous and contemptible. I dare not entreat your pardon. But I shall never make you wretched any more...."

When he noticed things again, from the chair in which he crouched, he found that the night had passed and daylight filled the room. He was shuddering with cold. And he got feebly up, and wavered towards the bed.

"She did not ponder her words," babbled the aunt, who came to him aghast—"she will return to you. When the two months are over and she is back in Paris, you will see!"

"She pondered longer than you surmise, and she will never return to me," he said. "And what is more, a man with nothing to offer can never presume to seek her. No, I have done with illusions—she will be no nearer to me in Paris than in Monte Carlo; Frisonnette's Paris and mine henceforth will be different worlds."

Floromond lived, without Frisonnette, among the clothes that she had left behind; the dainty things that she had prized had been abandoned now that she was to be decked in masterpieces. They hung ownerless, the *peignoir*, and *tricot*, and dresses—the pink, and the mauve, and the plaid—gathering the dust, and speaking of her to him always.

"She has soared above you, dish-clouts!" he would cry sometimes, half mad with misery. "It was you who first estranged us—now it is your turn to be spurned." And, as he tossed sleepless, his fancy followed her; or pacing the room, he projected some passionate indictment, which, on reflection, he never sent.

"You should try to work," his reason told him. "If you worked, you might manage to forget in minutes." And, setting his teeth, he took palette and brush and worked doggedly for hours. But he did not forget, and the result of his effort was so execrable that he knew that he was simply wasting good paint.

Then, because work was beyond him, and his purse was always slimmer, he began to make *déjeuner* do for dinner, too. And not long after that, he was reducing his rations more every day. It was a haggard Floromond who threaded his way among the crowds that massed the pavements when some weeks had passed. The boulevards were gay with booths of toys and trifles now; great branches of holly glowed on the *baroques* of the flower-vendors at the street corners; and the restaurants, where throngs would fête the *Réveillon*, and New Year's Eve, displayed advice to merry-makers to book their tables well ahead.

"My own rejoicings will be held at home!" said Floromond.

And, during the afternoon of New Year's Eve, it was by a stroke of irony that the first comrade who had rapped at the door since Frisonnette's flight came to propose expenditure. "Two places go begging for the supper

at the Café des Beaux Esprits," he explained blithely, "and it struck me that you and your wife might join our party? Quite select, mon vieux. They promise to do one very well, and five francs a cover is to include everything but the wine."

"My wife has an engagement that she found it impossible to refuse," said the painter, huddled over the fading fire. "And as for me, I am not hungry."

The other stared. "There is time enough for you to be hungry by midnight."

"That is a fact," assented Floromond; "I may be most inconveniently hungry by midnight. But I am less likely to be scattering five francs. In plain French, my dear Bonvoisin, if you could lend me a few sous, I should feel comparatively prosperous. I am like the two places at the Beaux Esprits—I go begging."

Bonvoisin looked down his nose. "I should have been overjoyed to accommodate you, of course," he mumbled, "but at this season, you know how it is. What with the pestilential tips to the concierge, and the postman, and one thing and another, I am confoundedly hard up myself."

"All my sympathy!" said Floromond. "Amuse yourself well at the banquet." And he sprinkled a little more dust over the dying *boulets* in the grate, to prolong their warmth.

Outside, big snowflakes fell.

"The man who has never known poverty has never known his fellow-man," he mused; "I would have sworn for Bonvoisin. He has inspired me with an apophthegm, however—let us give Bonvoisin his due! And, to take a rosy view of things, turkeys are very indigestible birds, and, since I lack the fuel to cook it, I am spared the fatigue of going out to buy one for my mahogany to-morrow. Really there is much to be thankful for—the only embarrassment is to know where it is to be found. If I knew where enough tobacco for a cigarette was to be found, I would be thankful for that also. How the Mediterranean sparkles, and how hot the sun is, to be sure! We shall get freckles, she and I. Won't you spare me half of your beautiful sunshade, Frisonnette? Upon my word, I could grow light-headed, with a

little encouragement; I could imagine that the steps I hear on the staircase now are hers! Fortunately, I have too much self-control to let fancy fool me."

Nevertheless, as he leant listening, his face was blanched.

The steps drew nearer.

"I know, of course, they go to the room on the other side; a moment more, and they will pass," he told himself, holding his breath.

But the steps halted, and a timid tap came.

"It is a child with a bill—the laundress's child. I know thoroughly it is the laundress's child—I do not hope!" he lied, tearing the door open.

And Frisonnette stood there, asking to come in.

"I have run away," she quavered. Her teeth were chattering, and her fashionable coat was caked with snow. "I should have come long ago—only, I was ashamed."

"You are real?" said Floromond, touching her. "You are not a dream?"

"Every day I have longed to be back with you, and at last I could bear no more. Do you think you might forgive me if you tried?"

"There is a tear on your cheek, and your dear little nose is pink with the cold, and the snow has taken your feathers out of curl," he answered, laughing and crying. "Let us pretend there are logs blazing up the chimney, and we will draw one chair to the hearth and tell each other how miserable we have been—or better than that, how happy we are!"

But still she clung to him, shivering and condemning herself.

"And so," she repeated, "I ran away. It is a habit I am acquiring. Finot is furious; he has dismissed me; I have no job and no money. I have come back with nothing, my Floromond, but the clothes I stand up in. And—and why do I find you with an empty coal-scuttle?"

"Ma foi!" he stammered, loath to deepen her distress, "as usual, that imbecile of a charbonnier has neglected to fulfil the order."

"He becomes intolerable," she faltered. "Is that why I notice that your tobacco-pouch is empty, too?"

"Oh, as for the tobacco-pouch," said the young man, "in this ferocious weather I have been reluctant to put on my hat."

"It is natural," murmured Frisonnette. But her eyes were frightened, and she investigated the cupboard. And when the cupboard was discovered to be as empty as the pouch and the coal-scuttle, she rushed to him in a panic.

"You are starving!" she moaned. "You have starved here, while I——Mon Dieu, I have not come home too soon!"

"Tut, tut," said Floromond; "are you trying to pose me for a hero of romance? I have been an idle vagabond, that is all. The cat is out of the bag, though—you have come home, ma Frisonnette adorée, and I have nothing for your welcome but my embrace!" And thinking of the want that lay before her, he broke down.

"I love you, I love you, Floromond," she wept.

"I love you," he sobbed, "I love you, Frisonnette."

Then, in the fading daylight, arose a plaintive cry—the wail of the itinerant wardrobe dealer: "*Chand d'habits!*"

"*Chand d'habits!*" she gasped, and darted to the window. "*Chand d'habits!*" she screamed—and stripped the smart costume from her and stood triumphant in her petticoat. Before the dealer's aged legs had toiled up half the stairs, she was back in the little old frock that had been cast aside. "Hook me, my Floromond!" And her eager arms were laden, and her frozen hands showered raiment on the floor: the *peignoir*, and *tricot*, and dresses—the pink, and the mauve, and the plaid. "We dine to-night!" she laughed. "Enter, *Chand d'habits!*"

"And, word of honour," observed Floromond, when the clocks of Paris had sounded twelve, and the pair sat digesting their beef-steak, and toasting their toes, and she rolled another cigarette for him, "word of

honour, you have never looked more captivating than you do now—that frock becomes you marvellously. At the same time, the fine clothes I have been gobbling lie somewhat heavy on my sensibilities, particularly the fascinating ribbons of the *peignoir*. If only I had kept my nose to the grindstone! Ah, if only we had something better to expect than this hand-to-mouth existence! Alas, on New Year's Day, I cannot give you even a bunch of flowers."

And, at that moment, hurrying feet approached the house—young and excited voices were heard below. And what should it prove to be Well, what it *should* have proved to be was, that his "Ariadne" had, in some ingenious way, been purchased, for a large sum, without his knowledge, and that a contingent of the quarter had arrived to proclaim his affluence; but, as a matter of semi-sober fact, it was only a posse of exhilarated students, wishing everybody the compliments of the season, and playing *Le Chemin de l'Amour* on a trombone.

Still, there was a beautiful morning, as we know, when Floromond and Frisonnette had flowers on their own balcony, and three rooms, and chairs that they had actually bought and paid for—to say nothing of the baby. The Moral of which is, that there are more New Year's Days than one and it's never too late to hope. So let us all hope now!

Cynthy's Joe

I don't think he'll be sech a fool as to p'int fer home the fust thing he does." The speaker, a young man with a dull, coarse face and slouching air, knocked the ashes from a half-smoked cigar with his little finger, which was heavily ornamented with a large seal ring, and adjusted himself to a more comfortable position.

"I dun'no which p'int o' the compass he'd more naterally turn to," observed another; an elderly man with a stoop in his shoulders, and a sharp, thin face that with all its petty shrewdness was not without its compensating feature—a large and kindly mouth. The third man in the little group was slowly walking back and forth on the platform that ran across the station, rolling and unrolling a small red flag which he held in his hands. He turned with a contemptuous "umph" to the young man, remarking as he did so, "Tain't mostly fools as goes to prison. Joe Atherton prob'ly has as many friends in this section o' the kentry as some who hain't been away so much."

"Joe was a good little boy," pursued the old station-master; "he wuz allers kind to his mother. I never heard a word ag'in him till that city swell came down here fer the summer and raised blazes with the boy."

"If there ain't the Squire!" exclaimed a hitherto silent member; "he's the last man as I should jedge would come to the deepo to welcome Joe Atherton."

A stout, florid, pompous individual slowdy mounted the platform steps, wiping his forehead with a flaming red silk handkerchief, which he had taken from his well-worn straw hat. "Warm afternoon, friends," he suggested, with an air of having vastly contributed to the information of the men, whose only apparent concern in life was an anxiety to find a shady corner within conversational distance of each other.

The Squire seated himself in the only chair of which the forlorn station boasted; he leaned back until his head was conveniently supported, and furtively glanced at a large old-fashioned watch which he drew from his vest pocket.

“Train's late this a'ternoon, Squar',” said the man with the red flag. “I reckon ye'll all hev to go home without seein' the show; 'tain't no ways sartin Joe'll come to-day. Parson Mayhew sed his time was up the fust week in September, but there's no tellin' the day as I knows on.”

A sustained, heavy rumble sounded in the distance. Each man straightened himself and turned his head to catch the first glimpse of the approaching engine, With a shriek and only a just perceptible lessening of its speed, the mighty train rushed by them without stopping, and was out of sight before the eager watchers regained the power of speech.

Five minutes later the red flag was in its place behind the door, its keeper turned the key and hastened to overtake his neighbor, who had reached the highway. Hearing the hurrying footsteps behind him, the man turned, saying triumphantly, “I'm right-down, glad he didn't come.”

“So be I; there's an express late this evenin' that might bring him down. I shall be here if Louisy's so as I kin leave her.”

“Wa'al,” returned the other, “I shan't be over ag'in to-night, but you jest tell Joe, fer me, to come right ta my house; he's welcome. Whatever he done as a boy, he's atoned fer in twenty years. I remember jest how white and sot his face was the day they took him away; he was only a boy then, he's a man now, gray-headed most likely; the Athertons turned gray early, and sorrow and sin are terrible helps to white hair.”

The old man's voice faltered a little; he drew the back of his hard, brown hand across his eyes. Something that neither of the men could have defined prompted them to shake hands at the “Corners”; they did so silently, and without looking up.

Joe came that night. The moon and the stars were the silent and only witnesses of the convict's return. It was just as Joe had hoped it might be; yet there was in the man's soul an awful sense of his loneliness and isolation. The eager, wistful light faded out of his large blue eyes, the lines about his firm, tightly-drawn mouth deepened, the whole man took on an air of sullen defiance. Nobody cared for him, why should he care? He wondered if “Uncle Aaron,” as the boys used to call him, still kept the old station and signaled the trains. Alas! it was one of “Louisy's” bad nights;

her husband could not leave her, and so Joe missed forever the cordial hand old Aaron would have offered him, and the kind message he was to give him, for his neighbor.

Sadly, wearily, Joe turned and walked toward the road, lying white and still in the moonlight. His head dropped lower and lower upon his breast; without lifting it he put out his hand, at length, and raised the latch of a dilapidated gate that opened into a deep, weed-entangled yard. His heart was throbbing wildly, a fierce, hot pain shot through his eyes. Could he ever look up? He knew the light of the home he was seeking had gone out in darkness years before. The only love in the world that would have met him without question or reproach was silent forever; but here was her home—his home once—the little white house with its green blinds and shady porch.

He must look up or his heart would burst. With a cry that rang loud and clear on the quiet night, he fell upon his face, his fingers clutching and tearing the long, coarse grass. There was no house—no home—only a mass of blackened timbers, a pile of ashes, the angle of a tumbling wall. Hardly knowing what he did, Joe crept into the shelter of the old stone wall. With his face buried in his hands he lived over again, in one short half-hour, the life he hoped he had put away when the prison doors closed behind him. All through the day there had struggled in his heart a faint, unreasoning faith that life might yet hold something fair for him; one ray of comfort, one word of kindness, and faith would have become a reality. As the man, at last lifted his pale, agonized face to the glittering sky above him he uttered no word of prayer or entreaty, but with the studied self-control that years of repression had taught him, he rose from the ground and walked slowly out of the yard and down the cheerless road again to the station. Life hereafter could mean nothing to him but a silent moving-on. Whenever or wherever he became known, men would shrink and turn away from him. There was no abiding-place, no home, no love for him in all God's mighty world. He accepted the facts; there was only one relief—somewhere, some time, a narrow bed would open for him and the green sod would shelter the man and his sin till eternity.

He hastily plucked a bit of golden-rod that nodded by the roadside; then taking a small, ragged book from a pocket just over his heart, he

opened it and put the yellow spray between the leaves. As he did so a bit of paper fluttered to the ground. Joe stooped and picked it up. It was a letter he had promised to deliver from a fellow-prisoner to his mother in a distant town.

Not very far away an engine whistled at a crossing. A slowly moving freight and accommodation train pulled up at the depot a few moments later. Joe entered the dark, ill-smelling car at the rear and turned his face once more to the world.

It was in the early twilight of the next evening that Joe found himself in the hurry and confusion of a large manufacturing town. As he passed from the great depot into the brilliantly lighted street, he was bewildered for a moment and stood irresolute, with his hand shading his eyes. At one corner of the park that lay between the station and the next street, a man with a Punch-and-Judy theatre had drawn around him a crowd of men, women, and children. Joe mechanically directed his steps that way, and unconsciously became a part of the swaying, laughing audience.

“Hold me up once more, do Mariar, I can't see nothin',” begged a piping, childish voice at Joe's knee.

“I can't, Cynthy; my arms is most broke now holdin' of ye; ef you don't stop teasin' I'll never take ye nowheres again,” replied a tall, handsome girl, to whom the child was clinging.

Joe bent without a word, and picking up the small, ill-shaped morsel of human longing and curiosity, swung her upon his broad shoulder, where she sat watching the tiny puppets and listening to their shrill cries, oblivious of all else in the world. Once she looked down into the man's face with her great, dark, fiery eyes and said softly, “Oh, how good you are!” A shiver ran through Joe's frame; these were the first words that had been addressed to him since he said good-bye to the warden in that dreary corridor, which for this one moment had been forgotten. The little girl, without turning her eyes from the dancing figures before her, put one arm about Joe's neck and nestled a little closer to him. Joe could have stood forever. The tall, dark girl, however, had missed Cynthy's tiresome pulling at her skirts and the whining voice. She looked anxiously about and called “Cynthy! Cynthy! where are you? I'll be thankful if ever I gets you back to

your grandmother.” The fretful words aroused Joe from his happy reverie; he hurriedly placed the child on the pavement, and in an instant was lost in the crowd.

He set out upon his quest the following morning and had no difficulty in finding the old woman he was seeking. At one of a dozen doors marking as many divisions of a long, low tenement building near the river, he had knocked, and the door had opened into a small, clean kitchen, where a bright fire burned in a tiny stove, and a row of scarlet geraniums in pots ornamented the front window. The woman who admitted him he recognized at once as the mother of the man in that far-away prison, whose last hold-upon love and goodness was the remembrance of the aged, wrinkled face so wonderfully like his own. In a corner behind the door there stood an old-fashioned trundle-bed. As Joe stepped into the room a child, perhaps ten years old, started up from it, exclaiming “That’s the man, Granny; the man who put me on his shoulder, when Mariar was cross. Come in! come in, man,” she urged.

“Be still, Cynthy,” retorted the grandmother, not unkindly, as she placed a chair for Joe, who was walking over to the little bed from which the child was evidently not able to rise alone. Two frail hands were outstretched to him, two great black eyes were raised to his full of unspoken gratitude. Joe took the soiled letter from its hiding-place and gave it to the woman without a word. She glanced at the scarcely legible characters, and went into an adjoining room, her impassive face working convulsively.

“What’s the matter with Granny, was she crying? I never seen her cry before,” said Cynthy. “Granny’s had heaps o’ trouble. I’m all thet’s left of ten children and a half-dozen grandchildren. She says I’m the poorest of the lot, too, with the big bone thet’s grow’d out on my back; it aches orful nights, and makes my feet so tired and shaky mornin’s. Granny’s kind o’ queer; some days she just sets and looks into the fire fer hours without speakin’, and it’s so still I kin a’most hear my heart beat; and I think, and think, and never speak, neither, till Granny comes back and leans over me and kisses me; then it’s all right ag’in, an’ Granny makes a cup o’ tea an’ a bite o’ toast and the sun comes in the winder, and I forget ’bout the pain, an’ go out with Mariar, when she’ll take me, like I did last night.”

The child's white, pinched features flushed feverishly, her solemn, dusky eyes burned like coals. She had been resting her chin in her hands, and gazing up into Joe's face with a fascinated intensity. She fell back wearily upon the pillows as the door opened, and her grandmother returned and put her hand on Joe's shoulder, saying brokenly, "You've been very kind." The little clock on the shelf over the kitchen table ticked merrily, and the tea-kettle hummed, as if it would drown the ticking, while Joe and Cynthy's grandmother discussed and planned for the future.

It was finally settled that Joe should look for work in Danvers, and if he found it, his home should be with the old woman and Cynthy. He did not try to express the joy that surged over and through his heart, that rushed up into his brain, until his head was one mad whirl; but with a firm, quick step and a brave, calm look on his strong face, he went out to take his place in the busy, struggling world—a man among men.

Two months passed; months of toil, of anxiety, sometimes of fear; but Joe was so gladdened and comforted by Cynthy's childish love and confidence, that, little by little, he came out of the shadow that had threatened to blacken his life, into the sunshine and peace of a homely, self-sacrificing existence in "Riverside Row."

Cynthy's ideas of heaven were very vague, and not always satisfactory, even to herself, but she often wondered, since Joe came, if heaven ever began here and she was not tasting some of its minor delights. Of course, she did not put it in just this way; but Cynthy's heaven was a place where children walked and were never tired, where above all things they wore pretty clothes and had everything that was denied them on earth. Joe had realized so many of the child's wild dreams, had made possible so many longed-for or unattainable pleasures, had so brightened and changed her weary, painful life, that to Cynthy's eyes there was always about his head a halo as in the pictures of Granny's saints; goodness, kindness, generosity—love, were for her spelled with three letters, and read—Joe. Out of the hard-earned wages the man put into Granny's hand every Saturday night, there was always a little reserved for Cynthy. Her grandmother sometimes fretted or occasionally remonstrated; but Joe was firm. Alas! human life, like the never-resting earth, of which it is a part,

swings out of the sunlight into the shadow, out of the daytime into the darkness through which the moon and the stars do not always shine.

One night, a bitter, stormy night in November, he was a little late in leaving his work. He had to pass, on his way out of the building, a knot of men who were talking in suppressed voices. They did not ask him to join them, but the words “prison-scab,” “jail-bird”, fell on his ever-alert ear. With a shudder he hurried on.

Granny was stooping over the trundle-bed in a vain attempt to quiet the child, who was tossing upon it, in pain and delirium. Cynthia had slipped upon a piece of ice a few days before, and now she was never free from the torturing, burning pain in her back. Sometimes it was in her head, too, and then with shrill, harsh cries, she begged for Joe, until Granny thanked God when the factory-whistle blew and she heard the man's quick, short step on the pavement. Joe warmed himself at the fire for a moment, then taking Cynthia in his tired arms, he walked slowly up and down the room. Through the long, dreary night he patiently carried the moaning child. If he attempted, never so carefully, to lay her down, she clung to him so wildly or cried so wearily that Joe could only soothe her and take lip the tiresome march again. Granny, thoroughly worn out, sat sleeping in her large chair. Cynthia grew more restless. Once she nearly sprang from Joe's arms, screaming, “Go way, Mariar; you're a hateful thing! I won't listen; 'tain't true; Joe is good,” and dropping back heavily, she whispered, “I love you, Joe.” She knew, then! Joe thought his heart would never throb again.

He listened for the early morning whistles. One by one they sounded on the clear, keen air, but never the one for which he waited. As soon as it was light, he peered through the ice-covered window at the tall chimneys just beyond the “Row.” They rose grim and silent, but no smoke issued from them. The end had come. Joe knew a strike was on.

Sometime in the afternoon of that day Cynthia suffered herself to be placed on the small, white bed; but she was not willing Joe should leave her, and was quiet only when he held her feeble hand in his close grasp. No sound escaped the man's white lips. Only God and the angels watched his struggle with the powers of darkness. As night came on again, Cynthia sank into a heavy sleep, and Joe, released, took his hat and went out very softly.

He stopped after a long walk at the massive doors of a “West End” palace. He followed with downcast eyes the servant who answered his ring into a small but elegant reception-room, where he was told he might wait for the master of the house, the owner of the large manufactory where he was employed. Into the patient ear of this man, whom he had never seen before, Joe poured the story of his life. The sin, the shame, the agony of despair, his salvation through Cynthy.

“I will call my son,” said the sympathizing old gentleman as Joe rose to go; “he is one of Danvers' best physicians. He will go with you and see what can be done for the little girl.”

An hour later the two men were bending over the sick child. “She is very ill,” said the young doctor, in reply to Joe's mute, appealing face. “This stupor may end in death, or it may result in a sleep which will bring relief. You must be brave, my friend. A few hours to-night will decide. You may hope.” Joe's weary limbs faltered beneath him. He fell upon his knees breathing a wordless prayer that the child might be spared to bless and comfort his lonely, aching heart; while all unseen the Angel of Life hovered over the little bed.

The Tune McGilveray Played

McGilveray has been dead for over a hundred years, but there is a parish in Quebec where his tawny-haired descendants still live. They have the same sort of freckles on their faces as had their ancestor, the bandmaster of Anstruther's regiment, and some of them have his taste for music, yet none of them speak his language or with his brogue, and the name of McGilveray has been gallicised to Magille.

In Pontiac, one of the Magilles, the fiddler of the parish, made the following verse in English as a tribute of admiration for an heroic deed of his ancestor, of which the Cure of the parish, the good M. Santonge, had told him:

"Piff! poem! ka-zoon, ka-zoon!
That is the way of the organ tune—
And the ships are safe that day!
Piff! poum! kazoon, kazoon!
And the Admiral light his pipe and say:
'Bully for us, we are not kill!
Who is to make the organ play
Make it say zoon-kazoon?
You with the corunet come this way—
You are the man, Magillel
Piff! poum! kazoon, kazoon!'"

Now, this is the story of McGilveray the bandmaster of Anstruther's regiment:

It was at the time of the taking of Quebec, the summer of 1759. The English army had lain at Montmorenci, at the Island of Orleans, and at Point Levis; the English fleet in the basin opposite the town, since June of that great year, attacking and retreating, bombarding and besieging, to no great purpose. For within the walls of the city, and on the shore of Beauport, protected by its mud flats—a splendid moat—the French more than held their own.

In all the hot months of that summer, when parishes were ravaged with fire and sword, and the heat was an excuse for almost any lapse of virtue, McGilveray had not been drunk once—not once. It was almost unnatural. Previous to that, McGilveray's career had been chequered. No man had received so many punishments in the whole army, none had risen so superior to them as had he, none had ever been shielded from wrath present and to come as had this bandmaster of Anstruther's regiment. He had no rivals for promotion in the regiment—perhaps that was one reason; he had a good temper and an overwhelming spirit of fun—perhaps that was another.

He was not remarkable to the vision—scarcely more than five feet four; with an eye like a gimlet, red hair tied in a queue, a big mouth, and a chest thrown out like the breast of a partridge—as fine a figure of a man in miniature as you should see. When intoxicated, his tongue rapped out fun and fury like a triphammer. Alert-minded drunk or sober, drunk, he was lightning-tongued, and he could play as well drunk as sober, too; but more than once a sympathetic officer altered the tactics that McGilveray might not be compelled to march, and so expose his condition. Standing still he was quite fit for duty. He never got really drunk “at the top.” His brain was always clear, no matter how useless were his legs.

But the wonderful thing was that for six months McGilveray's legs were as steady as his head was right. At first the regiment was unbelieving, and his resolution to drink no more was scoffed at in the non-com mess. He stuck to it, however, and then the cause was searched for—and not found. He had not turned religious, he was not fanatical, he was of sound mind—what was it? When the sergeant-major suggested a woman, they howled him down, for they said McGilveray had not made love to women since the day of his weaning, and had drunk consistently all the time.

Yet it was a woman.

A fortnight or so after Wolfe's army and Saunders's fleet had sat down before Quebec, McGilveray, having been told by a sentry at Montmorenci where Anstruther's regiment was camped, that a French girl on the other side of the stream had kissed her hand to him and sung across in laughing insolence:

“Malbrouk s’en va t’en guerre,”

he had forthwith set out to hail this daughter of Gaul, if perchance she might be seen again.

At more than ordinary peril he crossed the river on a couple of logs, lashed together, some distance above the spot where the picket had seen Mademoiselle. It was a moonlight night, and he might easily have been picked off by a bullet, if a wary sentry had been alert and malicious. But the truth was that many of these pickets on both sides were in no wise unfriendly to each other, and more than once exchanged tobacco and liquor across the stream. As it chanced, however, no sentry saw McGilveray, and presently, safely landed, he made his way down the stream. Even at the distance he was from the falls, the rumble of them came up the long walls of firs and maples with a strange, half-moaning sound—all else was still. He came down until he was opposite the spot where his English picket was posted, and then he halted and surveyed his ground.

Nothing human in sight, no sound of life, no sign of habitation. At this moment, however, his stupidity in thus rushing into danger, the foolishness of pursuing a woman whom he had never seen, and a French woman at that, the punishment that would be meted out to him if his adventure was discovered—all these came to him.

They stunned him for a moment, and then presently, as if in defiance of his own thoughts, he began to sing softly:

“Malbrouk s’en va t’en guerre.”

Suddenly, in one confused moment, he was seized, and a hand was clapped over his mouth. Three French soldiers had him in their grip—stalwart fellows they were, of the Regiment of Bearn. He had no strength to cope with them, he at once saw the futility of crying out, so he played the eel, and tried to slip from the grasp of his captors. But though he gave the trio an awkward five minutes he was at last entirely overcome, and was carried away in triumph through the woods. More than once they passed a sentry, and more than once campfires round which soldiers slept or dozed. Now and again one would raise his head, and with a laugh, or a “Sapristi!” or a “Sacre bleu!” drop back into comfort again.

After about ten minutes' walk he was brought to a small wooden house, the door was thrown open, he was tossed inside, and the soldiers entered after. The room was empty save for a bench, some shelves, a table, on which a lantern burned, and a rude crucifix on the wall. McGilveray sat down on the bench, and in five minutes his feet were shackled, while a chain fastened to a staple in the wall held him in secure captivity.

"How you like yourself now?" asked a huge French corporal who had learned English from an English girl at St. Malo years before.

"If you'd tie a bit o' pink ribbon round me neck, I'd die wid pride," said McGilveray, spitting on the ground in defiance at the same time.

The big soldier laughed, and told his comrades what the bandmaster had said. One of them grinned, but the other frowned sullenly, and said:

"Avez vous tabac?"

"Havey you to-ba-co?" said the big soldier instantly—interpreting.

"Not for a Johnny Crapaud like you, and put that in your pipe and shmoke it!" said McGilveray, winking at the big fellow, and spitting on the ground before the surly one, who made a motion as if he would bayonet McGilveray where he sat.

"He shall die—the cursed English soldier," said Johnny Crapaud.

"Some other day will do," said McGilveray. "What does he say?" asked Johnny Crapaud.

"He says he'll give each of us three pounds of tobacco, if we let him go," answered the corporal. McGilveray knew by the corporal's voice that he was lying, and he also knew that, somehow, he had made a friend.

"Y'are lyin', me darlin', me bloody beauty!" interposed McGilveray.

"If we don't take him to headquarters now he'll send across and get the tobacco," interpreted the corporal to Johnny Crapaud.

"If he doesn't get the tobacco he'll be hung for a spy," said Johnny Crapaud, turning on his heel. "Do we all agree?" said the corporal.

The others nodded their heads, and, as they went out, McGilveray said after them:

"I'll dance a jig on yer sepulchrees, ye swobs!" he roared, and he spat on the ground again in defiance. Johnny Crapaud turned to the corporal.

"I'll kill him very dead," said he, "if that tobacco doesn't come. You tell him so," he added, jerking a thumb towards McGilveray. "You tell him so."

The corporal stayed when the others went out, and, in broken English, told McGilveray so.

"I'll play a hornpipe, an' his gory shroud is round him," said McGilveray.

The corporal grinned from ear to ear. "You like a chew tabac?" said he, pulling out a dirty knob of a black plug.

McGilveray had found a man after his own heart. "Sing a song a-sixpence," said he, "what sort's that for a gentleman an' a corporal, too? Feel in me trousers pocket," said he, "which is fur me frinds for iver." McGilveray had now hopes of getting free, but if he had not taken a fancy to "me baby corporal," as he called the Frenchman, he would have made escape or release impossible, by insulting him and every one of them as quick as winking.

After the corporal had emptied one pocket, "Now the other, man-o-wee-wee!" said McGilveray, and presently the two were drinking what the flask from the "trousies pocket" contained. So well did McGilveray work upon the Frenchman's bonhomie that the corporal promised he should escape. He explained how McGilveray should be freed—that at midnight some one would come and release him, while he, the corporal, was with his companions, so avoiding suspicion as to his own complicity. McGilveray and the corporal were to meet again and exchange courtesies after the manner of brothers—if the fortunes of war permitted.

McGilveray was left alone. To while away the time he began to whistle to himself, and what with whistling, and what with winking and talking to the lantern on the table, and calling himself painful names, he endured his captivity well enough.

It was near midnight when the lock turned in the door and presently stepped inside—a girl.

“Malbrouk s’en va t’en guerre,” said she, and nodded her head to him humorously.

By this McGilveray knew that this was the maid that had got him into all this trouble. At first he was inclined to say so, but she came nearer, and one look of her black eyes changed all that.

“You’ve a way wid you, me darlin’,” said McGilveray, not thinking that she might understand.

“A leetla way of my own,” she answered in broken English.

McGilveray started. “Where did you learn it?” he asked, for he had had two surprises that night.

“Of my mother—at St. Malo,” she replied. “She was half English—of Jersey. You are a naughty boy,” she added, with a little gurgle of laughter in her throat. “You are not a good soldier to go a-chase of the French girls ‘cross of the river.”

“Shure I am not a good soldier thin. Music’s me game. An’ the band of Anstruther’s rigimint’s mine.”

“You can play tunes on a drum?” she asked, mischievously.

“There’s wan I’d play to the voice av you,” he said, in his softest brogue. “You’ll be unloosin’ me, darlin’?” he added.

She stooped to undo the shackles on his ankles. As she did so he leaned over as if to kiss her. She threw back her head in disgust.

“You have been drink,” she said, and she stopped her work of freeing him.

“What’d wet your eye—no more,” he answered. She stood up. “I will not,” she said, pointing to the shackles, “if you drink some more—nevere some more—nevere!”

“Divil a drop thin, darlin’, till we fly our flag yander,” pointing towards where he supposed the town to be.

“Not till then?” she asked, with a merry little sneer. “Ver’ well, it is comme ca!” She held out her hand. Then she burst into a soft laugh, for his hands were tied. “Let me kiss it,” he said, bending forward.

“No, no, no,” she said. “We will shake our hands after,” and she stooped, took off the shackles, and freed his arms.

“Now if you like,” she said, and they shook hands as McGilveray stood up and threw out his chest. But, try as he would to look important, she was still an inch taller than he.

A few moments later they were hurrying quietly through the woods, to the river. There was no speaking. There was only the escaping prisoner and the gay-hearted girl speeding along in the night, the mumbling of the quiet cascade in their ears, the shifting moon playing hide-and-seek with the clouds. They came out on the bank a distance above where McGilveray had landed, and the girl paused and spoke in a whisper. “It is more hard now,” she said. “Here is a boat, and I must paddle—you would go to splash. Sit still and be good.”

She loosed the boat into the current gently, and, holding it, motioned to him to enter.

“You’re goin’ to row me over?” he asked, incredulously.

“Sh! get in,” she said.

“Shtrike me crazy, no!” said McGilveray. “Divil a step will I go. Let me that sowed the storm take the whirlwind.” He threw out his chest.

“What is it you came here for?” she asked, with meaning.

“Yourself an’ the mockin’ bird in yer voice,” he answered.

“Then that is enough,” she said. “You come for me, I go for you. Get in.”

A moment afterwards, taking advantage of the obscured moon, they were carried out on the current diagonally down the stream, and came quickly to that point on the shore where an English picket was placed. They had scarcely touched the shore when the click of a musket was heard, and a “Qui-va-la?” came from the thicket.

McGilveray gave the pass-word, and presently he was on the bank saluting the sentry he had left three hours before.

“Malbrouk s’en va t’en guerre!” said the girl again with a gay insolence, and pushed the boat out into the stream.

“A minnit, a minnit, me darlin’,” said McGilveray.

“Keep your promise,” came back, softly.

“Ah, come back wan minnit!”

“A flirt!” said the sentry.

“You will pay for that,” said the girl to the sentry, with quick anger.

“Do you love me, Irishman?” she added, to McGilveray.

“I do—aw, wurra, wurra, I do!” said McGilveray. “Then you come and get me by ze front door of ze city,” said she, and a couple of quick strokes sent her canoe out into the dusky middle of the stream; and she was soon lost to view.

“Aw, the loike o’ that! Aw, the foine av her-the tip-top lass o’ the wide world!” said he.

“You’re a fool, an’ there’ll be trouble from this,” said the sentry.

There was trouble, for two hours later the sentry was found dead; picked off by a bullet from the other shore when he showed himself in the moonlight; and from that hour all friendliness between the pickets of the English and the French ceased on the Montmorenci.

But the one witness to McGilveray's adventure was dead, and that was why no man knew wherefore it was that McGilveray took an oath to drink no more till they captured Quebec.

From May to September McGilveray kept to his resolution. But for all that time he never saw "the tip-top lass o' the wide world." A time came, however, when McGilveray's last state was worse than his first, and that was the evening before the day Quebec was taken. A dozen prisoners had been captured in a sortie from the Isle of Orleans to the mouth of the St. Charles River. Among these prisoners was the grinning corporal who had captured McGilveray and then released him.

Two strange things happened. The big, grinning corporal escaped from captivity the same night, and McGilveray, as a non-com said, "Got shameful drunk." This is one explanation of the two things. McGilveray had assisted the grinning corporal to escape. The other explanation belongs to the end of the story. In any case, McGilveray "got shameful drunk," and "was going large" through the camp. The end of it was his arrest for assisting a prisoner to escape and for being drunk and disorderly. The band of Anstruther's regiment boarded H.M.S. Leostaf without him, to proceed up the river stealthily with the rest of the fleet to Cap Rouge, from whence the last great effort of the heroic Wolfe to effect a landing was to be made. McGilveray, still intoxicated but intelligent, watched them go in silence.

As General Wolfe was about to enter the boat which was to convey him to the flag-ship, he saw McGilveray, who was waiting under guard to be taken to Major Hardy's post at Point Levis. The General knew him well, and looked at him half sadly, half sternly.

"I knew you were free with drink, McGilveray," he said, "but I did not think you were a traitor to your country too."

McGilveray saluted, and did not answer.

"You might have waited till after to-morrow, man," said the General, his eyes flashing. "My soldiers should have good music to-morrow."

McGilveray saluted again, but made no answer.

As if with a sudden thought the General waved off the officers and men near him, and betkcned McGilveray to him.

“I can understand the drink in a bad soldier,” he said, “but you helped a prisoner to escape. Come, man, we may both be dead to-morrow, and I’d like to feel that no soldier in my army is wilfully a foe of his country.”

“He did the same for me, whin I was taken prisoner, yer Excillincy, an’—an’, yer Excillincy, ‘twas a matter of a woman, too.”

The General’s face relaxed a little. “Tell me the whole truth,” said he; and McGilveray told him all. “Ah, yer Excillincy,” he burst out, at last, “I was no traitor at heart, but a fool I always was! Yer Excillincy, court-martial and death’s no matter to me; but I’d like to play wan toon agin, to lead the byes tomorrow. Wan toon, Ginerall, an’ I’ll be dacintly shot before the day’s over—ah, yer Excillincy, wan toon more, and to be wid the byes followin’ the Ginerall!”

The General’s face relaxed still more.

“I take you at your word,” said he. He gave orders that McGilveray should proceed at once aboard the flag-ship, from whence he should join Anstruther’s regiment at Cap Rouge.

The General entered the boat, and McGilveray followed with some non-com. officers in another. It was now quite dark, and their motions, or the motions of the vessels of war, could not be seen from the French encampment or the citadel. They neared the flag-ship, and the General, followed by his officers, climbed up. Then the men in McGilveray’s boat climbed up also, until only himself and another were left.

At that moment the General, looking down from the side of the ship, said sharply to an officer beside him: “What’s that?”

He pointed to a dark object floating near the ship, from which presently came a small light with a hissing sound.

“It’s a fire-organ, sir,” was the reply.

A fire-organ was a raft, carrying long tubes like the pipes of an organ, and filled with explosives. They were used by the French to send among the vessels of the British fleet to disorganise and destroy them. The little light which the General saw was the burning fuse. The raft had been brought out into the current by French sailors, the fuse had been lighted, and it was headed to drift towards the British ships. The fleet was now in motion, and apart from the havoc which the bursting fire-organ might make, the light from the explosion would reveal the fact that the English men-o'-war were now moving towards Cap Rouge. This knowledge would enable Montcalm to detect Wolfe's purpose, and he would at once move his army in that direction. The west side of the town had meagre military defenses, the great cliffs being thought impregnable. But at this point Wolfe had discovered a narrow path up a steep cliff.

McGilveray had seen the fire-organ at the same moment as the General. "Get up the side," he said to the remaining soldier in his boat. The soldier began climbing, and McGilveray caught the oars and was instantly away towards the raft. The General, looking over the ship's side, understood his daring purpose. In the shadow, they saw him near it, they saw him throw a boat-hook and catch it, and then attach a rope; they saw him sit down, and, taking the oars, laboriously row up-stream toward the opposite shore, the fuse burning softly, somewhere among the great pipes of explosives. McGilveray knew that it might be impossible to reach the fuse—there was no time to spare, and he had set about to row the devilish machine out of range of the vessels which were carrying Wolfe's army to a forlorn hope.

For minutes those on board the man-o'-war watched and listened. Presently nothing could be seen, not even the small glimmer from the burning fuse.

Then, all at once, there was a terrible report, and the organ pipes belched their hellish music upon the sea. Within the circle of light that the explosion made, there was no sign of any ship; but, strangely tall in the red glare, stood McGilveray in his boat. An instant he stood so, then he fell, and presently darkness covered the scene. The furious music of death and war was over. There was silence on the ship for a time as all watched and waited. Presently an officer said to the General: "I'm afraid he's gone, sir."

“Send a boat to search,” was the reply. “If he is dead”—the General took off his hat “we will, please God, bury him within the French citadel to-morrow.”

But McGilveray was alive, and in half-an-hour he was brought aboard the flag-ship, safe and sober. The General praised him for his courage, and told him that the charge against him should be withdrawn.

“You’ve wiped all out, McGilveray,” said Wolfe. “We see you are no traitor.”

“Only a fool of a bandmaster who wanted wan toon more, yer Excillincy,” said McGilveray.

“Beware drink, beware women,” answered the General.

But advice of that sort is thrown away on such as McGilveray. The next evening after Quebec was taken, and McGilveray went in at the head of his men playing “The Men of Harlech,” he met in the streets the woman that had nearly been the cause of his undoing. Indignation threw out his chest.

“It’s you, thin,” he said, and he tried to look scornfully at her.

“Have you keep your promise?” she said, hardly above her breath.

“What’s that to you?” he asked, his eyes firing up. “I got drunk last night—after I set your husband free—after he tould me you was his wife. We’re aven now, decaver! I saved him, and the divil give you joy of that salvation—and that husband, say I.”

“Hoosban’—” she exclaimed, “who was my hoosban’?”

“The big grinning corporal,” he answered.

“He is shot this morning,” she said, her face darkening, “and, besides, he was—nevare—my hoosban’.”

“He said he was,” replied McGilveray, eagerly.

“He was alway a liar,” she answered.

“He decaved you too, thin?” asked McGilveray, his face growing red.

She did not answer, but all at once a change came over her, the half-mocking smile left her lips, tears suddenly ran down her cheeks, and without a word she turned and hurried into a little alley, and was lost to view, leaving McGilveray amazed and confounded.

It was days before he found her again, and three things only that they said are of any moment here. “We’ll lave the past behind us,” he said-“an’ the pit below for me, if I’m not a good husband t’ ye!”

“You will not drink no more?” she asked, putting a hand on his shoulder.

“Not till the Frenchies take Quebec again,” he answered.

Music Hath Charms

It was the very last place in the world where you would have expected to hear the notes of a church harmonium; and the old man who, seated on a reed stool, was playing *God Save the Queen* with one finger, was the very last person whom you would have expected to see performing upon it. But there it stood, quite at home, between, the wooden pillars which divided the central living-room from the crowd of latticed closets around it; and there he sat, quite at home, on the stool, his naked brown legs struggling with the bellows, his brown fingers patting down the keys with a sort of pompous precision. For Punoo was a music-master, and that was his pupil who, with a yawn, was watching his proceedings from the floor while she threaded beads on a string intermittently. That was also the last place from which one would expect any one to take a music-lesson; but old Punoo being blind was fully persuaded that Bahâni was dutifully at his elbow. This blindness of his was, however, far more to his advantage than his disadvantage as a master. It was, in short, the cause of his being one at all; since had he had the use of his eyes no mother would have dreamed of employing a man, who was not more than forty-five at the outside, in teaching her girls. As it was, his time was fully taken up in the houses of the clerks, contractors, barristers, and such like, who for some reason or another desired to impart the exotic accomplishment of music to their daughters or wives. But of all these houses Punoo loved the one which contained the harmonium best; not because of his pupil, since Bahâni, who was betrothed to a young man who might be seen any day on a Hammersmith omnibus over on the other side of the world, never learned anything; but because of the instrument itself. To tell truth it had quite a fine tone, especially when all the wind in its wheezy bellows was sent into one note. And then the playing of it seemed to satisfy him from head to foot. All the other instruments, the accordions and concertinas, even his own fiddle with seven strings, of which he was really very fond, only employed his head and his hands; but this made his whole body as it were to toil and labour after melody. As he sat, his forehead bedewed with perspiration, the expression on his sightless face, turned upwards all unconscious of the dingy, sordid, smoke-blackened rafters which limited his

vision, was quite sufficient to make up for the lack of it in the music; it was the expression of a prisoner who, through the bars of a cage, sees freedom. But the odd little gridiron in the centre of the dark room, which gave it some light and air from the roof above, was scarcely large enough to allow even of Punoo's wizened figure to pass through.

"Lo, it gives one a melting of the liver, and a sinking of the heart to hear thee, Master-jee," remarked Mai Kishnu, bustling in with a handful of radishes for the pickle-stew. "Canst not play something more lively, something that goes not wombling up and down like an ill-greased wheel, something with a count in it that gives a body time to catch the beat of it? For sure I could make better music with my ladle and tray; better music for a bride anyhow; and mark my word, Bahâni, when thou art really one there shall be none of this *boo-hooing* and *ow-wowling*, that might set free thoughts of wolves and God knows what monsters to damage all thy hopes."

"'Tis not likely, Mai," said Punoo, desisting to speak with great dignity, "that Bahâni will have mastered so much. 'Tis not given to all to play *God Save the Queen* as I do."

"That is good hearing!" ejaculated the house-mother piously. "But the girl gets on, I hope, Master Punoo. Her father writes of it often; and the instrument, as thou knowest, cost fully ten shillings."

In Punoo's account, which he retailed to his other customers, it had cost five times that amount, and he had a spirited description of the auction where Colonels and Deputy-Sahibs, and Barrack-Masters had bidden in vain against Bahâni's father Mool Chand, who was municipal clerk in an outlying district. According to Punoo also it had cost five hundred times that amount when the Padre Sahib,—sometimes it was the Lord Padre Sahib—(the Bishop),—had sent for it originally from England. There was a further legend, vague and misty even to himself, which he kept holy, as it were, from profane use by locking it away in his own breast, which hinted that the harmonium had been thrown on the market from no desire to get rid of it, but simply from pecuniary necessity; the Chaplain having been forced into selling his greatest treasure in order to pay the bill for a new one. To tell truth, Punoo's estimate of the harmonium was vague and misty on more

points than this. He was, in fact, absolutely ignorant of anything concerning it, save that if you blew persistently at the bellows and pressed the keys it made a noise which somehow or other seemed to set you free, and yet kept you longing for something more. Punoo knew not for what, having not the slightest idea that he had been born with music in his soul, and that if he had first seen the light in the Western hemisphere instead of the Eastern, he would most likely have been a Wagnerite or some other kind of musical enthusiast.

As it was, to oblige Mai Kishnu he played *Minnia Punnieya* as quickly as he could, though it was a pain and grief to him to give up the long-drawn notes which sounded so beautiful in *God Save our Gracious Queen*. But Mai Kishnu stirred the pickle-stew to the new rhythm, emphasising it properly with little strokes of the ladle upon the resounding brass pot. Bahâni, she said, must learn that tune against her man's return from being made into a *balester* (barrister); whereat Bahâni with the utmost decorum giggled and blushed over her beads. She was a pretty, pert girl, who looked upon the future with perfect serenity; for being married to her first cousin whose widowed mother lived in the house, she knew exactly what the amount of friction between her and her future mother-in-law would be; and knew also that she would generally be able to escape quietly, as she did now, from the scene of conflict, and leave the two elder women to have it out at full length if they chose. They generally did choose, because they nearly always had an interested audience; for the quaint rambling old house with its rabbit-warren of tiny rooms opening out to little bits of roof, was full of relations; chiefly women whose husbands were away in Government employ. They each had a separate lodging, as it were, though they were quite as often in some one else's room as in their own, especially when the sound of shrill altercation echoed through the wooden partitions. By a recognised etiquette, however, all serious disputes were carried on in the well-room where the women bathed. It was more a verandah than a room, though the arches were filled up breast-high with a screening wall. But through the hole in the floor, above which the windlass stood, you could not only see right down into the well on the basement story, but also see the people in the street coming for their water. It was when Bahâni was discovered lying flat on the floor so as to crane over and peep into the very street itself, that the fiercest quarrels arose between Mai

Kishnu and her widowed sister-in-law. And no quarrel ever ran its course without a reference of some sort to the harmonium, and the iniquity and idiotcy of learning to play tunes as if you were a bad woman in the bazaar. In her heart of hearts Mai Kishnu agreed with this view of the question, but she would sooner have died than confess it, so she invariably carried the war into the enemy's country instead, by insisting on it that Bahâni learned in deference to the oft-expressed desire of her lawful husband, that husband being the complainant's own son. And sometimes, but not often, for she was a faithful defender of the absent municipal clerk, she would clinch the matter by telling her sister-in-law that if there was iniquity or idiotcy about, her brother was also to blame. Whereupon Râdha, who, being the widow of an elder brother, really was, in a way, the head of the house, would retort that in that case it was all the more necessary for the women-folk of the family to remember that the salvation of souls lay with them; so she would beg to remind all present, that this being a dark Saturday or a light Friday, with some particular event in prospect or some particular event in the past, it behoved no pious women of that family to eat, say radishes, on that day. Now, when you have just spent much time and skill in the preparing of pickles for a large household, it is aggravating to be told that it is an impious diet. Still there was always the obvious retort that on such days widows ate nothing at all. So then Râdha, with pharisaical acquiescence, would retire to her own little bit of a room, with her husband's photograph (he had been a clerk also) hung between two German prints of the Madonna and Herodias' daughter (which did duty respectively for the infant Krishna and Durga Devi slaying the demons) and begin counting her beads with a clatter, and repeating her texts in an aggressively loud voice; while Mai Kishnu, after sending the pickle-stew of radishes down in the window-basket as an alms to the first beggar in the street, would begin to cook something else; something as nasty as her deft hands could make it, since this, oddly enough, relieved her feelings.

But Punoo would go on playing *God Save our Gracious Queen* on the old harmonium with perfect serenity, all unconscious of the fact that two women were cursing it in their hearts as a malevolent demon bent on ruining the household. It was a quaint household when all was said and done, this colony of women, whose husbands were for the most part away serving the Government in remote stations. Quaintest of all it was, perhaps,

when in the afternoon the boys belonging to it (and there were many, thank Heaven! despite the demon) came home from school; embryo clerks full of classes and examinations, yet with a word or two for "crickets" and a desire for pickled radishes on every day in the calendar.

"Ask your Aunt Râdha," Mai Kishnu would say shortly to their remonstrances over the nasty substitute for the delicacy. "'Twas she forced me into giving your stomachsful of my best pickles to some dirty beast of a beggar in the street. God forgive me if he was a holy man, but he may have been a Mohammedan for all I know, and what good will that do to my soul?"

But despite the "crickets" and the examinations, despite the vague leavening of Western freethought, the boys fought shy of their Aunt Râdha, perhaps from the veil of uncertainty which their education was necessarily throwing over all things. There were so many ideas, and one must be right; it might be this one. In a way they were more afraid of her and her views than Mai Kishnu was, who never doubted at all. But then Mai Kishnu knew that she could always have the upper hand over her sister-in-law in the matter of cold baths in the winter mornings; for Râdha thought twice about interfering with the beams in other folks' eyes, when the mote of her own about warm water for religious ablutions was ready to her adversary's hand.

The boys, however, though they ate the nasty substitute for pickles without more ado, were not so biddable in the matter of *God Save the Queen*. As they sat on the dark flight of steps between the living-room and the well-verandah they used to pipe away at it in English in the oddest falsetto. And Bahâni, who was a bit of a tomboy, would imitate them, and then go into fits of shrill laughter at her own gibberish.

Altogether it was a very quaint household, and it was a very quaint noise indeed which went up to high Heaven from it; the boys' voices, Bahâni's mocking laugh, Râdha's muttered texts, Mai Kishnu's vexed clattering of her ladles and pots, and blind Punoo's perspiring efforts after melody on the old harmonium. For he never attempted harmony; that was beyond his self-taught execution altogether. But the sense of it was there, showing itself in sheer delight at pulling out all the stops that still existed, and blowing away till he could no more from sheer exhaustion.

So the years had passed contentedly enough for every one; especially for the old music-master who every day went away with the unleavened cake, which was his only fee, knowing that even such payment was in excess of his desires, since it was enough for him to have the honour and glory of playing on the harmonium, and of boasting about his proficiency on that instrument to his other pupils who were forced to be content with an accordion or some such ignoble instrument.

And then one day the funny, old rambling house was in a perfect ferment of preparation, and even Râdha's face was beaming; for her son was coming home. He was coming from the Hammersmith omnibus and the boarding-house in Notting Hill, coming from the rush and roar of London to take up the threads of life again in the dark latticed rooms where Mai Kishnu made pickles and his mother said her prayers; above all where Bahâni waited for him, all dyed with turmeric and henna, and clothed in tinselled garments. The little household temple up on the roof, where there were more German prints doing duty as various gods and goddesses, had scarcely an instant's respite from the multitudinous rituals; and if there was a minute or two to spare, the women downstairs were sure to remember something else which if left undone would bring the most direful misfortune on the young couple. There was no quarrelling now, only a babel of shrill kindly voices. And there was no music, save of a kind to which Mai Kishnu could clatter her ladles and pans; drubbings of drums and endless tinklings of *sutaras*—for the good lady had set her foot down as regards the harmonium, even to the extent of showing off Bahâni's accomplishment. Accomplishment forsooth! What need was there of such fools' talk between a newly-met young couple? And though Gunesha had come back from the other side of the world dressed like a real Sahib, that did not prevent his being a young man, and knowing a pretty bride when he saw one. So, thank heaven! there they were at last, in the pleasant cool upper room on the roof, which had been all newly whitewashed and painted and strewn with flowers for the auspicious occasion, looking into each other's eyes as young people should. It was all so proper, so touching, so infinitely satisfactory, that for once Kishnu and Râdha fell on each other's necks and wept tears of sympathy.

But Punoo wandered in and out as a privileged guest among the merry-making and the bustle, sidling up to his closed treasure, feeling it all over in sightless fashion, and longing for the time when he should be called upon, as the bride's master, to display her accomplishment; for by this time she could play *Minnia Punniya* and a few other tunes quite correctly. But the days passed, and those two on the roof, despite music and culture, despite all the sciences and all the 'ologies, were quite content with those things which had contented their fathers and mothers before them. It was not so with old Punoo. Even his fiddle afforded him no comfort; and though his other pupils' accordions and concertinas gave him the correct musical intervals which his ear approved instinctively, but which his hand was too unpractised to reproduce with the accuracy which satisfied him, they were poor substitutes for that splendid tone which was born of vehement pumping and perspiration. Perhaps it was really the latter he craved; that feeling of labouring body and soul to give expression to something within him.

Even billing and cooing like a couple of pigeons on the roof, however, must come to an end, and after some three weeks of it, the barrister one day discovered that there was a harmonium in the dark arches of the living-room. He was beginning by this time to think that he had perhaps drifted a little too far back into the old life, and that as he had every intention, when this first very natural and inevitable relapse was over, of setting up house on more civilised lines, it might be as well to show off his new habits a little, and so emphasise the difference which he meant to draw between his life and the life led in the quaint old ancestral house. So without more ado, without any asking of how it came there, or who played on it, he whisked his coat-tails (for he had resumed European dress on his descent from the roof) over the music-stool with the consummate air of a performer and set his feet to the pedals and his hands to the keys.

"What a wheezy old thing!" he cried, when a sort of agonised moo as from a sick cow came in response. Bahâni, standing decorously in the shadow with her veil down in most alluring bashfulness, tittered, and old Punoo, who had stood still in sheer surprise, moved forward with a superior smile.

The barrister heard and saw, and a frown came to his self-satisfied face. "The bellows are leaking," he cried again; "but never mind, it shall do something; I'll make it!"

Something indeed! The women giggled and stopped their ears, but old Punoo stood transfixed, a great pain, a great joy coming to his sightless face. Was that the harmonium? Was that *God Save the Queen*, that pæon of melody and harmony together, coming in great waves of sound and bearing him away, further and further and further into some unknown land that was yet a Land of Promise? And all these years he had lived in ignorance; he had boasted, he had said that he could play it, his priceless treasure! Priceless! ay, he had been right there. Listen to it! Was it not priceless? A sort of passion of pride surged up in him overpowering all thought of himself.

Then there was a loud crack, a wheeze, a sudden silence; and the barrister stood up wiping his forehead, for he had worked hard. "That has done for the old thing," he said with a laugh; "but it was past work anyhow, and I prefer a piano any day of the week. Don't stand in the corner, Bahâni. You must learn to behave like an English lady now, and there is nothing to be ashamed of in your husband, I assure you."

Mai Kishnu and Râdha looked at each other as if for support, and the vague affright and sheer surprise of their faces made them once more sympathetic. "It is a new world, sister," whispered the one to the other as they moved off respectively to their prayers and their pickles, leaving the barrister making love to his bride over the prospect of the piano he was going to give her.

But Punoo moved softly, blindly, over to his old seat and set his feet to the pedals and his fingers to the keys. But no sound came from them, not even that poor travesty of *God Save the Queen* which had once filled him with pride. And as he sat fingering the dumb keys, idly, a dim content that it should be so came into the old musician's soul. The swan-song had been beautiful, but it had been a song of death. He, after all, had known the harmonium best.

Why the Angels Rejoiced

"Good-night Mrs. Seymour. Must you leave so quickly?" asked a lady of an elderly woman, who was hurrying past her pew with the stream of worshippers that were leaving the chapel after the Sabbath-evening service was ended, without waiting for the short prayer-meeting which usually followed.

"Yes, ma'am, I can't wait a minute longer, for my husband's promised to go to the Mission Hall, and the angels are going to rejoice to-night," answered Margaret Seymour with a radiant light of expectancy upon her pale face.

"God grant that you may not be disappointed," returned the lady, with a cordial pressure of the hand, and, as Margaret hastened out, her friend inwardly marvelled at the strong faith which, during a lifetime of neglect and cruelty, had sustained her poorer sister through terrible seasons of hardship and toil.

Margaret Seymour had early left a Christian home to become the wife of a man, who, destitute of any real religion himself, soon commenced to mock and persecute the woman who had been induced to take a false step, hoping to win her husband to seek for himself the joys which were hers. But, hitherto, the hope had proved vain. Richard Seymour had sunk lower and lower, until, enfeebled in health by his drunkenness and follies, his family mainly depended upon the exertions of the wife and mother for daily bread. Still, Margaret's faith did not fail. If she worked incessantly all day long, and often far into the night, her prayers went up without intermission to the Throne of Grace. There had been a time when she had trusted the answer was at hand, for her husband had been induced to attend a small Mission Hall near by, and whilst there had been powerfully moved, and for a few weeks had given up some of his sinful pursuits; but just when Margaret and the friends from the Hall were beginning to rejoice over Richard as a "brand plucked from the burning," he fell back into his former habits.

Margaret was sorely disappointed; but, casting herself again upon the faithful word of her God, she took up the cross apportioned to her, and went on her way in confident assurance of coming blessing. But for some weeks past her desire for her husband's salvation had intensified, and she had felt moved to pray with an earnestness that surprised even herself. Her cry became that of the patriarch: "I will not let Thee go, except Thou bless me." But no apparent result manifested itself. Indeed, Richard appeared to grow more hardened and desperate than ever, and it required all the grace and patience that Margaret possessed, to endure his continual cruelty with meekness.

On the Saturday evening preceding the Sunday when she had expressed her conviction of a joyful termination to her anxious watching, a knock was heard at her door, and opening it, the kindly face of one of the workers from the Mission Hall was seen.

"Is your husband in, Mrs. Seymour?" asked the man.

"Yes," answered Margaret, in an undertone, "he's just sitting down a bit before going out for the evening; but come in and you'll catch him nicely."

"Good-evening, Mr. Seymour, I'm glad to find you at home," were the words that caused Richard to look up in angry surprise.

"Evenin'," he muttered by way of reply, without removing his pipe from his mouth.

"I'm real sorry to have missed you from the Hall for so long, Mr. Seymour, and I've been wondering whether you meant to leave us altogether. We only want to be your friends, you know, and you don't want to run away from those who would do you a good turn if you'd let them," said the worker, nothing daunted by his ungracious reception.

Again Richard looked up, and perhaps the fact that his visitor was a working-man not much above his own station in life, rendered him more susceptible to the attention shown him. And besides, the spoken words were not mere empty talk, Richard could not but acknowledge; for practical help in dire need had found its way to the poverty-stricken home, from the

Christian friends who had rallied round his wife. So, with half-shamed face, he answered gruffly:

"I didn't think of comin' again; such places ain't for the likes of me."

"And who do you think they are for then? Why, my man, it's poor folks like you and me, who wouldn't feel comfortable in grand churches and chapels, that want such homely places, where we can slip in and out without being looked down upon."

"Maybe you're right so fur; but you don't want no smokin', drinkin' fellers, anyhow," responded Richard.

"You're making another mistake, Mr. Seymour; for the truth is, we're better pleased to see them turn up than any other sort of folks; so you'd better give me leave to call for you to-morrow evening at eight o'clock, before the service begins."

"Well, I'm beat. You mean to take it out of me, somehow, and I may as well give in, but you needn't trouble to call. I'll come, sure enough."

"That's settled," said the man, rising to go, adding, as he offered his hand to Richard, "You won't forget."

"No fear, with my old woman to pester me," answered Richard, with a grim relaxing of his features. But as the door closed behind the visitor, his face darkened, and, although he said nothing to his wife, he sat gloomily watching the fire for a long time, then, muttering something about "them interferin' folks," he put his pipe into his pocket, and passed out into the street.

"God grant they may have interfered to some purpose!" said Margaret.

Hastily finishing the domestic duties which were filling her hands, she turned for encouragement to the Book which had proved its power to solace and cheer in the darkest hour. Presently, with thought and desire too intense to allow the usual posture of devotion, she rose, and began to pace her kitchen, while she wrestled and interceded for her sinning husband. It was during that memorable hour of strong crying, that the sweet assurance

of a speedy answer was given; and the language of petition no longer poured from her lips, but gave place to that of thanksgiving for another repenting one, over whom there would shortly be rejoicing "in the presence of the angels."

But to the eye of sense, nothing seemed more unlikely, as Richard staggered home late that night in his usual drunken condition, and rose the next morning in the worst of tempers, following her footsteps from place to place, with the evident purpose of provoking her with his cruel taunts, until she should retaliate. Clothed in the armour of God, Margaret, however, withstood all the fiery darts that were flung around her during that eventful day. As the winter afternoon waned, she observed, with uneasiness, that Richard made no attempt to change the working clothes in which he had lounged about all day, for the better suit and the clean shirt, which she had managed by dint of self-denial should never be wanting.

"I'm pretty sure he'll make that his excuse for not going to the Hall to-night; but there, the Lord isn't confined to that place, and He can just as well save Richard in his dirty shirt at home, if He thinks best, as up there; and He's going to do it, sure enough; for didn't He tell me the angels should rejoice over him?" she said to herself. She ventured, however, a quiet remonstrance, saying: "Your Sunday things are laid out, Richard, and you'd better get a wash; you'll feel fresher." But the only answer she received was a curt: "Mind your own business, woman."

Meanwhile, Richard himself was feeling his own misery more deeply than he would have confessed to a living soul. "I'd like to escape from it all; but I've gone too far; I've had my chances, if ever a man had, and I'd like to know what good'll come of my goin' to the Hall and seein' all those folks again; it'll only make me more miserable than I am. I wish I hadn't promised, and I've half a mind to turn into the 'Blue Boar' instead," muttered the man to himself.

"Richard," said his wife as she put on bonnet and shawl, and picked up her Bible and hymn-book, after tea was over; "I'm going up to the chapel, but the sermon will be over in plenty of time for me to get back to the Mission-place. You'll be sure to be dressed and ready waiting for me."

"I shan't promise nothin'," growled Richard; but although Margaret heard the words as she went out, she left the house with a light heart. Altogether uncertain of his own intention, Richard strode about the room, his pipe in his mouth, and his hands in his pockets.

"Anyhow," he said, "I may as well have a look at the water," and going to the sink he washed himself for the first time that day. And then he sat down, making no further attempt to prepare himself for his wife's return. "She never lets a feller have any peace," he said, inwardly blaming her for his mental unrest. He was sitting in his chair, still smoking, when Margaret returned.

"O, Richard, you are not ready, and we shall be late!" she said.

"I never told you I was goin'," he answered, scowling at her.

"No, but you told Mr. Brown so, last night; and if you aren't there soon, he's sure to come round, and see what's the matter, as he would be certain to suppose you'd keep your promise unless something had happened."

Surely it was heaven-sent wisdom that breathed in the words with which she answered Richard's evasions. She was unprepared for the sudden effect of her reply. Rising in haste, he said: "Here, get me my things as quick as you can; I don't want that feller again." In a few minutes, neatly dressed, Richard went up the street with his rejoicing wife.

They were singing as the two entered; but Margaret walked boldly up to the top of the room, and Richard was reluctantly compelled to follow her. He would have chosen to have slipped into the first seat by the door, from whence egress could have been easy; but his wife determined that once within those four walls, Richard should stay until the end of the meeting. So she allowed him to pass into his seat first, and then she followed him. But there was little fear of Richard being anxious to leave the place; for, after the first prayer, he sat spell-bound, and riveted to the spot, while the Holy Spirit revealed to him his guilt and sin. His wasted life rose before him until the burden of his misery seemed too great to be borne, and he could no longer prevent groans and tears from bearing witness to his anguish of soul.

"Come and speak to my poor husband, will you, please, Mr. Brown?" said Margaret, as the people were dispersing. The man crossed the room, and sought to pour in the balm of Gilead to the wounded conscience.

"You don't think he died for such a big sinner as me?" was the response. "Why, man, you don't know what a life I've led my poor wife there! She's been beaten and kicked, and half-starved most of her time, while I've spent my money in what's ruined body and soul, and you mean to tell me that I may be saved from the hell I deserve?"

"Yes, I mean just that, and the Saviour tells you so in His own words; so there can be no doubt about it."

"Let me know quick what He says," groaned the man. Mr. Brown took a pocket Bible from his coat and read the following passages:

"Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness and from all your idols, will I cleanse you." "The Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost." "I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." "Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." "Him that cometh to Me, I will in no wise cast out."

"Do you mean to say that's written all fair and square, in black and white?" asked Richard, who had been listening with open mouth to the slow reading of the inspired words.

"Yes, I do; here, look for yourself." Richard grasped the book and, following the direction of Mr. Brown's finger, with difficulty spelled out for himself the blessed promises and invitations. As he reluctantly handed the Bible back, a sigh of relief broke from him, and he exclaimed: "Ay, it's there, sure enough! so He came to call sinners, did He? drunkards like me!" A wonderful light overspread his face, and as the truth broke fully upon his troubled mind, he started to his feet crying out: "O, what a mighty Saviour! Bless Him, bless Him, for He died for me!" The workers gathered round in silent joy as the shout of a King rang through the place; but Margaret fell upon her knees and broke into praise that was surely no faint echo of the exulting song which pealed through the courts of heaven as the glad tidings

were proclaimed of another soul new-born into the liberty of the sons of God.

"Ah, my dear," said Richard to his wife, as late at night they sat together in their home: "I've been a brute to you and the children; but, God helping me, I'll make amends."

"Don't trust to yourself, Richard, my dear; you'll get plenty of chaff from your mates, and plenty of temptation from within, and you must look for help to Him who's got all needful strength and grace for you," replied Margaret, as they sat and talked with one another far on into the early morning.

"I say, nurse, can't you give this 'ere feller a sleepin' draught, or summat as will keep his mouth shut for a spell? There's no such thing as gettin' a wink o' sleep with him a shoutin' 'glory' all the time," said a rough man who was occupying one of the beds in the infirmary.

"Poor fellow! it's a wonder to me how he can bear so much suffering and never open his lips to complain," answered the nurse, turning her kindly eyes towards the adjoining bed, where lay Richard Seymour, wasted by the ravages of a sore disease, doubtless the result of early excess and long years of intemperance. After witnessing a good confession of his faith before ungodly companions, and for his Master's sake enduring scorn and persecution nobly, he had suddenly been laid low on the bed of death.

"You needn't make any wonder of it, nurse," he answered; "I don't feel as if I could grumble at my pain when my blessed Lord suffered on the cross for me—praise His dear name!"

"Queer kind of a chap, ain't he?" said the man who had first spoken, moving uneasily in his bed.

"Ay, Jim, I wish you knew what it was to feel 'queer' after the same fashion. You may if you like, you know; the same mercy's for you as for me, and O, mates!" said Richard, looking round upon the rows of faces that were turned towards him; "it may be 'queer;' but it's worth while havin' somethin' that will make you so happy when you come to face death, that

you can't sleep for thinkin' of the blessed Saviour, and how He's waitin' for you."

So Richard testified to his fellow-sufferers until the last. Early one morning the nurse heard him whisper faintly: "I'll soon be at home over there." The next moment he quietly closed his eyes in death. Verily, a brand plucked from the burning, a sinner saved by grace.

An Averted Tragedy

Merna Wood stood leaning against the jamb in the open doorway.

The morning-glory vines made a very effective draping for a very pretty picture; the attitude was the acme of indolence, which an indescribable expression of alertness belied.

Ned Glover was standing below, his face just on a level with hers; he was looking at her laughingly—in fact he was nearly always laughing—and Merna was never certain that he meant one-half that he was saying, which at this moment was: "Yes; I am going to buy a nice little home, and I want a housekeeper; will you come?"

Merna tossed her head saucily: "I do not intend to go out to service this summer," she replied.

"If I must do so, I will hire some one to do the work, and have my wife oversee it. Will you come as my wife, Merna?"

Merna flushed rosily, she was not yet sure that he was in earnest, so she replied lightly, "Oh, you are just funning, as the children say."

He tried to draw his face into lines of seriousness, but his bright blue eyes would twinkle, he was so jolly that it was impossible for him to assume an expression of severe gravity.

He caught her face in both his large palms, and kissed her fondly: "Say yes! Say yes, I tell you!" he whispered forcefully.

"Yes! Yes! Let me go, Ned, mother is looking!"

“Well, mother has a perfect right to look; we do not care!” his face one broad laugh.

Ned was from this time—of course—a privileged visitor; always pleasant, and in a manner affectionate, yet no more loverlike than before their engagement. The tender nonsense that helps to make courtship so sweet; the airs of possession on one side, and of loving subjection on the other, the happy planning by both for the future, seemed to be entirely forgotten.

Love is a magician who fits the eyes with a deceptive lens; but not even through love’s magnifying could Merna find tangible ground for rosy dreams; she was not exactly unhappy, neither was she quite satisfied. She took herself to task for being so foolish—just because of the lack of definite words—but he seemed to have forgotten the engagement altogether, as he made not the slightest allusion to it. It made Merna’s face burn whenever she thought of it: “I do wonder if he was just making game of me, trying to ascertain what answer I would give him! Oh, I wish that I had have said no—Oh, I do not know what I do wish!” angry tears filling her eyes as she thought.

Ned came as usual one evening, and remained until very late; once, as she was passing him, she rested her hand upon the table, and leaned toward him in the act of speaking; he covered the hand with his warm palm, and his breath swept her cheek as he whispered: “I wish that I had you all to myself in a nice little home of our own!”

Her radiant eyes answered him, and she bent her head until her cheek touched his caressing lips.

As he was bidding her good-night, he caught her in his arms, saying over and over again, “I do love you, Merna! You are the sweetest little woman on the face of the earth!”

Her face was filled with happiness, and her eyes glowed with tender light; but she laughingly put her hand over his lips: “I imagine that is what you call ‘taffy’!”

He held her closely for a moment, his voice growing low and earnest: “Little one, I mean every word that I say! I do love you—and if

only circumstances—well, never mind that talk, but believe that I truly love you!”

She sat in the moonlight thinking for a long time after he left; what was there in that closing speech which sent a chill over her? Only this—love is said to be blind—as to worldly judgment this is true; but love’s intuition of love grows keen with the development of the passion. She felt that she ought to be happy, but she was not—that is—not so very happy; little thrilling thoughts ran through her mind deliciously, then a cold wave of doubt, casting a chill over her spirits. A woman is flattered and pleased if a man makes her a sharer of his secrets, whether of business or otherwise; she thus knows that he fully trusts her love and judgment, and she holds it a sacred charge. She thought uneasily that she could have no fond anticipations with any certainty of their proving a reality. Whatever she built must be the very airiest kind of an air castle, its only foundation an engagement which seemed like a burlesque. Vague allusions, or even words of endearment do not form a very tangible ground upon which to build.

A restless sigh escaped her lips: “I wish——” The unfinished sentence ended with another sigh.

The next evening she waited for Ned in a state of impatient restlessness, she had determined to have a nice long talk with him, although she was not in anywise certain as to what she would say; she thought she would lead him to talk of the future, and the home of which he had spoken; she wondered if he would talk of it frankly, or would he evade her questions as he so often had done, as though he did not comprehend her remark.

She watched the clock anxiously; she walked down the path to the gate a dozen times; she took up her embroidery, set a half-dozen stitches, and laid it down in disgust; she took a book instead, turned a page or two without comprehending a word and tossed it aside with an exclamation of impatience, to restlessly drum on the window.

“Merna, what ails you?” asked her mother querulously.

“Oh, my head aches,” was the evasive reply.

“You had best go to bed; you make me nervous, fidgeting around so!”

“It is too early to go to bed! I’ll go out in the air a little while—perhaps that will help my head,” answered Merna.

“Merna Wood, you have been down to that gate about a dozen times; why don’t you be honest, and say that you are looking for Ned!” half in derision, and a trifle crossly, retorted her mother.

Merna answered with mock humility: “Yes’m, I’ll confess, if you will not be cross. Oh, mamsy, I wish he would come; there is something I wish to say to him!” she kneeled down with her head on her mother’s knee, like a little child.

Her mother replied laughingly: “It appears to me that you do usually have something to say to him,” but her hand wandered caressingly through the soft, bright hair; thus evidencing her sympathy.

He did not come that night nor the next, and for three almost unending months Merna neither heard from nor of him; then incidentally, she heard that he was gone, but where her informant did not know.

Gone without so much as a word to her!

She shut her grief within her heart and went about her duties but with the subtle essence of hope and faith taken out of her life—she thought forever—she had little idea how elastic is hope; faith is more ethereal, hope has tough fibre.

When her mother would have sympathized with her, she made light of it: “I don’t care! If he wants to stay away, he can; don’t you fret about me, mamsy!” But mamsy was not in the least deceived.

A year swept by, and Merna had become less restless, more submissive to that which she deemed the inevitable; it is a mercy that time casts so tender a haze over all things.

Ned had written no letter to her; at first she grieved, but latterly she had grown indignant.

“Why do you not accept other company?” said her mother.

“Oh, I don’t care for them; they are not nice, mamsy.”

“You are a very foolish little girl to waste your affections upon one who cares so little,” said her mother.

“Now, mamsy, I am not wasting a particle of anything. As for Ned Glover, I hate him!”

Her mother laughed, but said no more, trusting to time to effect a cure.

It was a lovely evening in June; the wind softly fluttered the thin curtains at the open window bringing in the odor of the roses which grew just outside. Merna sat in a low rocker just within, her arms thrown above her head, her book lying unheeded upon her lap; she was so absorbed in reverie that she heard no sound, and a sudden darkening of the window startled her.

Resting his arms on the window ledge, Ned stood regarding her quizzically: “Are you too sleepy to say ‘how do you do?’ How I do wish for a kodak!” precisely as though he had not been gone a day.

Merna started up with a subdued exclamation, and before she realized it she was smiling up into his laughing face.

How often she had thought of this meeting—*if* he should return—and pictured to herself the cool, indifferent air with which she would greet him; instead, she was laughing and chatting as merrily as though there had been no break in their intercourse.

He resumed precisely his former position; he made just the same vague, intangible allusions, without one word upon which to place a hope securely. Merna seemed plastic in his hands—and what was there to resist, or to resent? Nothing—perhaps; yet Merna lost her healthful calm, and grew restless and irritable; one cannot successfully resist the intangible, or do battle with the wind. His alternate tenderness, and good-natured indifference filled her with restless longing; she wished that he would be more explicit, or go away and leave her alone; she thought resentfully that it was unjust that because of her sex she must utter no word to further her own happiness; and because custom ordered it, she must take the crumbs

offered to her, or go altogether hungry; she must have no voice in shaping her future beyond an assent or denial. Oh, yes; to be sure! There are a thousand ways in which a woman may signify her preference, but it would be very shocking if she should put it into words, unless the man asked her to do so! It looks for all the world like putting a premium upon intrigue.

Her girlish friends exchanging confidences, rallied her about her beau: "Oh, Merna, when are you going to be married?"

"Just as soon as I can find a man who will marry me," retorted she, but she flushed painfully.

"Oh don't cheat! Tell us all about it!"

"There is nothing to tell," replied Merna looking distressed.

A wild chorus of dissent greeted this reply; as soon as possible Merna slipped away to cry out her grief and mortification. She thought that every one of them was laughing at her because of her uncertainty regarding her lover.

Ned certainly had no such feelings; he took everything for granted in a laughing, off-hand way, not to be resisted; he came continually, he monopolized her completely; he spoke to her, and of her as belonging to him, but always in that laughing way which left the impression of a joke; he did not say, such a day we will be married; such a place will be our home; he said instead: "You belong to me; you could not get away from me if you tried; I should find you, I shall always know where you are."

This was all very sweet, but—very unsatisfying. He was strong, masterful, laughingly dominant; but he was also either very thoughtless, or very secretive.

He made no allusion to the time of his absence except once; he had that evening been unusually demonstrative, and Merna—from some remark made by him—felt emboldened to ask: "Where were you while so long absent?"

"Oh, a dozen places. I can't tell you—things get so mixed up sometimes that I don't know what I'm about myself," he replied evasively.

"You might have written," said Merna quietly, it almost seemed indifferently.

"Yes, I know—in fact I meant to, but—I hate to write letters, and there was nothing that you would care to know—" he broke off abruptly, as though he did not wish to betray himself.

"No, of course not," answered Merna, with quiet sarcasm; she felt hurt and indignant, but was altogether too proud to show it.

Although Merna made no further mention of it, he seemed to feel ashamed of his neglect, and repeatedly said: "I will never leave again, without telling you that I am going;" so that in this respect she felt a greater assurance; but he spent the evening with her as usual, and in the usual manner bid her good-night, and she saw him no more for three years.

Sad changes came to Merna during this interval; her mother, long a widow, sickened and died. Merna's grief was beyond words—beyond thought even; it benumbed all her senses. The home which she had thought her own was taken from her—unjustly—but what did that matter? She was alone, and as ignorant of law as a babe. Poor child! She thought that it did not matter, that nothing mattered, now that the gentle face of her mother had faded out of life; she felt that she could no longer live within those memory-haunted walls. During all these sad days she heard nothing from Ned, and her heart cried out piteously: "Oh, if he truly loved me he would not leave me to bear my burdens alone." These hard realities took away all the lingering grace of girlhood, but added the charm and poise of sweet, self-reliant womanhood.

In these old towns, where people are born, live, and die in the same old house, generation after generation; where the ways are peaceful and narrow; where people drift along, content with no innovations of knowledge, or new ways brought from the bustling, outside world, there develops an aristocracy peculiarly its own, and those not within its old-fashioned circle can scarcely obtain a living. Not to own the home which their ancestors owned is looked upon as a disgrace; and owning it, to part with it, though the misfortune is not through fault of the owner—is considered a greater disgrace, for which there could be no extenuation. Merna very keenly realized that she was under the ban of social ostracism.

She left this, her native place, for a town, newer and busier, where work was to be had for such unskilled hands as hers.

Being wholly inexperienced in the ways of the world, as well as in labor, Merna found it hard to obtain the means of subsistence; she was a woman fair to look upon, and alone, therefore her path was beset with peril; but she was able to retain her own self-respect—that most truthful of all commendation—she was possessed of too much native refinement to be led into the vulgarity of evil ways, or seduced from right by fluent sophistries.

One blustering day, when the wind shrieked around the street corners, and carried onward clouds of fine, penetrating dust, intermingled with the falling snow, whirling both into every opened doorway with malicious violence, a man wrapped in a great, shaggy overcoat, opened the door of the little store kept by Merna. There had been no customers all the morning; unless otherwise compelled, all were glad to remain within doors.

Merna came from the sitting room in the rear, and walked behind the counter awaiting her customer's pleasure; with his back toward her, he had taken off his fur cap, and was knocking out the snow against the door. Something familiar in the movements and attitude gave her a start, but it was not until he had unbuttoned his coat, and turned toward her, that she really recognized him; he walked to the counter, reaching out both hands, his blond face one broad smile. It was Ned—stalwart, hearty, and as usual—laughing.

Merna stood like one shocked, a terrible weakness assailed her; she saw the laughing face but dimly, his voice sounded strange and far off.

His robust tones aroused her: "Aren't you going to shake hands with me, after I have had such a time finding you?" he asked.

"Why did you seek me?" cried Merna passionately, surprised out of her usual self-control.

"Because I wanted to see you, to be sure!" The same laughing insouciance as of old, so impossible to understand; it might be pleasant raillery, it was quite as likely to be sarcasm.

“I wish that you had stayed away—after three years!” her voice rising shrilly.

He walked deliberately around the end of the counter, caught both her hands and held them firmly, his warm breath sweeping her cheek, his face so very near her own. “Did I not tell you that I should find you? I shall never lose sight of you!” his face still lower, his lips touching her cheek caressingly. “I am so glad to see you, my Merna! Say, ‘Ned I am glad that you are here!’” he whispered tenderly.

Ah, well! A woman’s a woman! and poor girl, her heart throbbed so happily; it seemed so good to have this great strong man holding her hands, whispering to her in this tender tone; what if the words did not promise much, the tone conveyed a world of tender meaning, and—she was so lonely. She had been so fiercely angry at him that she thought she hated him; she found that it was the act that she hated, and not the man; he held his old place in her heart. Presently she was shedding happy tears on his broad shoulder, and looking happily up into his face through her wet lashes; thrilling from her foolish little heart to the ends of her fingers with the delight of his very presence.

From this time on how different the dull, prosaic work seemed; the anticipation of the happy evening glorified each day, and he never failed to come. He appeared to be perfectly content in her company; he called her fond names, and usurped all the privileges of an accepted lover. He occasionally alluded to business, sometimes ending with, “When I get things into shape, I’ll pick you up and carry you off.”

Often Merna felt hurt, the allusions were so vague and really unmeaning, and the talk of business so indefinite—the sentences never quite complete—so that she had no certain knowledge as to what was his business. A half-confidence is much more vexatious than no confidence as it puts one to thinking; this was really no trust at all in her; just an aggravating shadow, like a cloud over the summer sun, which when you look upward in expectation of its grateful shade has sailed away.

A whole year passed away, and living in the light of his presence, her uneasy feeling had mostly worn away; if she gave it thought—that in reality she knew no more of the future than when he first returned, she

consoled herself, and excused him, by saying, "Oh, he is so odd, but he means all right."

As upon previous occasions there came an evening when she waited for him in vain; she could not settle herself to anything, even the chatter of her customers annoyed her, and her ear persistently hearkened for a well-known footstep; something must have detained him unavoidably; he would surely come to-morrow evening, but all the while her heart was sinking heavily. He did not come the next evening, nor the one following, and her fear grew to a certainty. She mentioned his name to no one, but watched the passers-by on the street, feverishly; she eagerly looked over the newspapers, hoping for a chance mention of him. The days seemed so long and wearisome; the corners of her mouth took a sad droop; the work grew so irksome. Others sought her company, but she turned from them with dislike, or made comparisons to their great detriment.

Business had heretofore been very good, but hard times came on, and little by little trade dropped off; it grew dull, then vexatious and finally exasperating; complaints were heard on every side. The days grew doubly sad when no customers came in to break the heavy monotony; the very silence grew oppressive, and Merna could scarcely restrain her tears. Her heart grew hard and bitter toward Ned, toward the world, and fate.

The wind whistled shrilly around the loosely built building, rattling the boards and battens, and swaying the canvas walls and ceiling dizzily, making Merna feel more desolate and despondent than usual. She stood behind the cigar case, looking gloomily out upon the wind-swept street; as if conjured up by her thought, Martin Balfour—her chief creditor—entered the store.

He came in with a great swagger, and called for a cigar: "Gi'mme a good one—twenty-five cent-er; I reckon I can afford it!" with an insolent leer.

Without reply, she handed him the box, to make his own choice.

He selected one, lighted it, and leaning lazily against the show case, puffed the smoke in huge volumes; he finally took the weed from his lips, ejected a mouthful of saliva on to the clean floor, flicked the ashes off

with his little finger, and said, "Well, Miss Wood, I s'pose you are ready to chalk up this morning?"

Merna flushed a vivid red, then went deadly pale; this man held a mortgage on everything she possessed, and his manner was distinctly aggressive. "I could not get the money this morning, Mr. Balfour; I have the promise of it the latter end of the week, and I beg of you to wait," faltered Merna.

He laughed loudly and coarsely: "As to waiting, I've waited just as long as I am going to; my kindness is all right, but I'm no guy, see! Your chump of a fellow left you to shift for yourself; I'm not one to drag up bygones—I'll marry you, and call the debt square!" He leaned across the showcase, and tried to grasp her hand.

Merna drew herself up indignantly: "I thank you, but I prefer paying my debts in a legitimate way."

"Well, fork over, then," he said brutally.

Tears filled her eyes, she had not one-tenth the amount, so she tried to temporize: "I will certainly raise it by the middle of the week——"

"The mortgage is due; it's got to be paid to-day! I'm going to take no more guff—either you promise to marry me, or I'll take the stock before night, see!" Protruding his face toward her still more aggressively.

Merna grew calm as he became excited; she thought of Ned with a pang of bitterness, that he could place her in a position to be insulted upon his account by such a man; but her disgust of the man himself outweighed all else. "Take the goods now; I shall make no more effort!" she said coldly.

"You'll be sorry! You'll come whining to me when you're starving," he flung after her angrily, as he went out.

Within an hour the place was stripped of everything; Merna stood with folded arms and saw them taken out without a tear, she seemed benumbed.

An acquaintance passing, came in: "What is the trouble, Miss Wood? Are you obliged to give up?" he asked kindly.

“Yes,” briefly.

He looked at her sorrowful face, and his heart filled with pity for her. He laid his hand over her’s, and said kindly: “I wish that you would give me the privilege of caring for you——”

Merna put out her hand as though to shield herself: “Wait! Wait! I cannot answer you now; come back this evening; my heart is too full now to think—I thank you——” she finished brokenly.

He lifted her hand to his lips respectfully, as he replied, “I will come,” and went out quietly.

Merna felt a hysterical desire to laugh; two proposals in one morning, and not an earthly thing which she could call her own; she thought grimly that she could not accuse either of them of being fortune hunters. Everything had been taken except a small sheet-iron stove, an old chair, and a rickety table, these had not been considered worth removing. She sat down in the chair, and laid her head on her arms on the table; she wished that she could cry, her heart beat so heavily; a wild anguish swept over her as she thought of her mother; she would not have deserted her in her hour of need; she cried aloud as a thought of Ned forced itself upon her consciousness: “Why cling to the shadow of a love, which only tantalizes me; he had no real love for me! I was just a good comrade—and a fool!” she added bitterly.

Presently she resumed her self-communing: “Why not accept this last proposal? Tom Thornton is a good man, and he loves me; better one who loves me so well, than waste my life upon a shadow which ever eludes my grasp;” the well-remembered look of Ned’s jolly face—though she was so sad—made her smile, then sigh restlessly.

With her head resting upon the table she dropped off into wearied slumber, from whence she entered dreamland. Strange, troubled visions passed her, out of which evolved Tom Thornton’s face, she heard him enter, and he stood beside her, her affianced husband; he sought to take her hand, but she turned from him with aversion, reaching out both hands to Ned, who approached her, stern and menacing.

“I can-not! I can-not!” she cried piteously.

“What is it, that you cannot do?” said a hearty voice in her ear.

“Marry Tom Thornton!” raising her woe-begone, haggard face.

“I should think not! You are going to marry me this very night! I’ve got everything fixed—a nice home, and all,” he finished exultantly, but as usual, indefinitely.

Merna was very wide awake now, and cried out, bitterly, “Why did you come back? Why don’t you stay away when you go?” the only thought presented to her mind being that he would stay until her whole hopes were fixed upon him, then he would again leave.

“Why did I come? After you, of course! Little woman, I depended upon you, you promised me, you know!” his voice trembling with an undefined fear.

“Yes, I remember that I promised, but you seem to have forgotten, ever since that you asked me for that promise!” indignantly.

His good-looking face sobered into amazement: “Merna! I only wished to keep all the worry away from you. I thought that you would not understand, and if I told you it would make you anxious!” a deep trouble in his voice.

Merna stood up, her hands on his shoulders: “Oh, Ned, Ned! Do you think that I am a baby—that I haven’t a grain of sense? A woman thinks that the man she loves is able to accomplish all things—if only he tells her all about it,” she finished with a gleeful laugh.

He stood looking at her in bewilderment, trying to get the whole meaning of that speech into his mind; at last he caught her, giving her an extravagant hug: “I see what you mean; you want me to understand that we are to be partners in all things; the business as well as the pleasure—the sorrow as well as the joys; I never had a little ‘pard’ before, and I think I did not catch on just right; but I’ll remember my lesson,” said he, laughing happily.

The door stood slightly ajar, as Ned had left it upon entering, and Tom Thornton stepped quietly within; he paused and smiled; then sighed as he silently went out. He was answered.